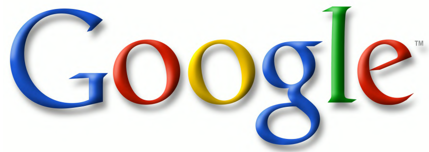

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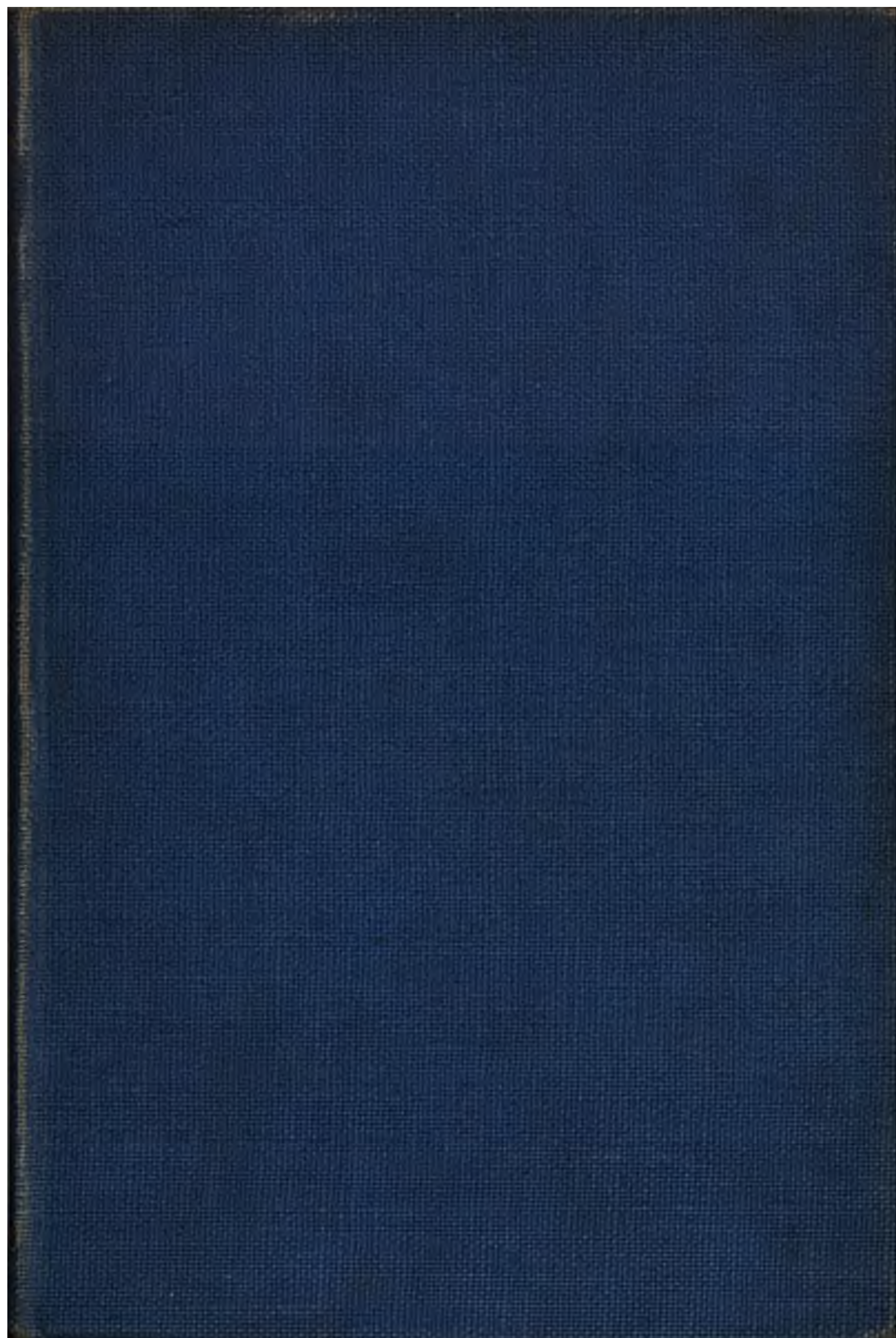

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OLYMPIA'S JOURNAL

GEORGE BELL & SONS,
LONDON: YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN,
AND NEW YORK: 66, FIFTH AVENUE.
CAMBRIDGE: DEIGHTON, BELL AND CO.

OLYMPIA'S JOURNAL

BY

W. S. HOLNUT

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INTRODUCTION.

FLORENCE, *May 1st*, 1890.

IT is now three years and a half since I first conceived the idea of writing down a minute record of all my thoughts and actions. I was then an enthusiastic girl, longing for distinction as an author, and eager to snatch at any opportunity of forwarding my ambition. I suppose my condition of mind about that time might be termed a craze, for it impelled me to an action upon which to the end of my life I shall look back with shame and remorse. This action, as the following pages will show, was my marriage with a man whom I could neither love, honour or obey, but who, from the singularity of his character

and life, appeared to be a desirable object for a psychological study.

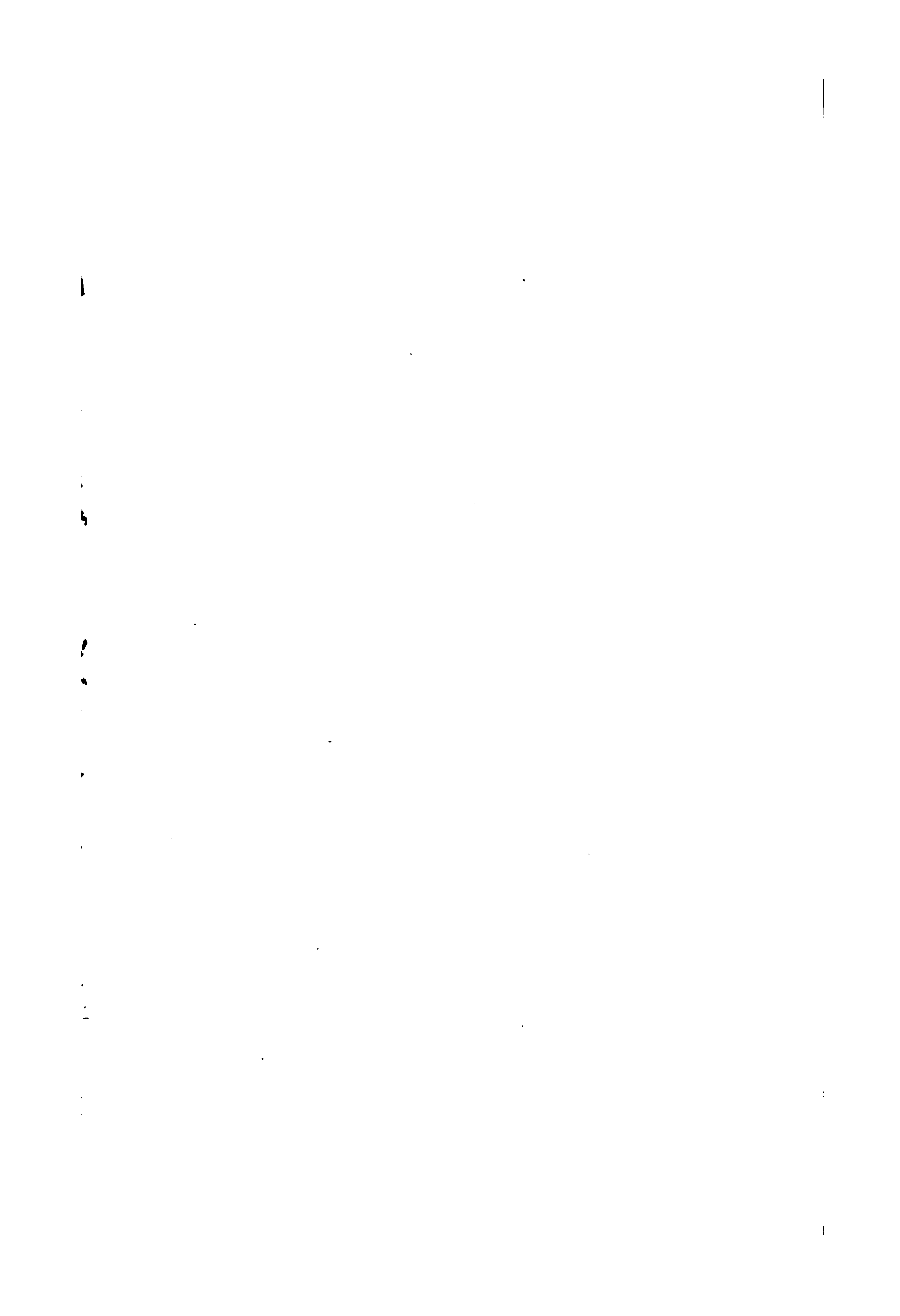
In sacrificing myself to my calling, I believed that I was performing a meritorious action: I forgot that I was also sacrificing him.

Now that years have passed and I have expiated, as far as lies in my power, the fault I then committed, I give parts of this diary to the world in the hope that my experiences may deter other women from a similar mistake.

In doing this I add nothing to the pages which were written for myself alone, and I omit nothing from them except such entries as are irrelevant. This is a confession, and therefore a part of my punishment.

OLYMPIA'S JOURNAL.

PART I.



A PREFACE WRITTEN IN MY DIARY.

COLLE BANDINO, FLORENCE,
January 1st, 1887.

MY name is Olympia Colville Daw, and I was born at High Daw in Northumberland nearly twenty-two years ago, my birthday falling on the 20th of January. Ours is a good old family which counts for something on the moors. My cousin Cuthbert reigns there now in my father's place, having succeeded him in default of a brother being born to me. When I was a little girl, five years old, my father died from an accident in the hunting-field, and mother and I had to turn out, of course. Two years later we came to Florence for

the sake of my education and her health. My training has been cosmopolitan. I have studied under the best professors, Singing, Declamation, French, Italian, German, and Spanish; also for three years I was a pupil of Meinherr von Alphen, at his studio in the Via dei Leoni. When I was nineteen, poor mother fell ill. Two months later she was no more. I pass over my grief and the unavailing regrets which every affectionate nature feels at such a loss. She had been more like an elder sister than a mother to me, even advising me in little matters which girls do not always confide to their mothers.

Before her death, Mrs. Craven Inglis, our cousin, came to stay with us. It was she who helped me through those dreadful months. As she had no ties in England it was not difficult to persuade her to become my companion. Later on my relations pressed me to go back and live in England, but the difficulty of selling the Villa prevented this plan, and I determined

to go on living as I had done till then with cousin Bertha as my chaperon.

During her life mother had saved a good deal of money, which, together with Aunt Dorothy's legacy, gave me about two thousand a year.

I do not know how it is, but the last two years have wrought a great change in me. I have grown suddenly older in mind, I suppose, and now the society of clever well-read people interests me much more than it used to do: in fact I feel a growing desire to take rank among them.

Signor Galvagna tells me I really ought to study literature seriously, and he advises me as a beginning to keep a diary as accurately and minutely as possible. He says it will accustom me to introspection, and to the analysis of my own and my friends' characters, and further, to habits of conscientious work which are the foundation of success in letters. He says that his sister, Eva Clough, and Marjorie Mackworth all do so, following the advice given to

them by Claude Doucet the French novelist, who said "Le journal intime est l'épine dorsale de l'étude scientifique et du Roman moderne." I am sure this advice is sound, and so I have determined to begin at once and put all my pride into the work.

January 1st.—The year begins uncomfortably for me. I have a bad cold, and Balzini forbids me to sing for ten days. If the sky clears before luncheon, I shall be able to get down to my dressmaker on foot by half past one, to try on my new gown. She says she will do her best to get it run together for to-morrow, but she must have a trying-on first. If it still rains I must have the brougham. I can see from here that those great ragged stones are still lying on the road at the corner by the tramway station. When will the authorities learn that horses' hoofs are not so hard as their own heads!

I have just looked through Vieusseux's catalogue, and I think that some of the following books will suit me: "Hereditary

Genius," "Pêcheur d'Islande," "Portrait of a Lady," and "The Ring and the Book."

If I am in for a bad cold I may as well prepare in advance to meet the enemy. I will write a line to Maria Galvagna to ask her to come in quietly to tea. She will be able to tell me how the rehearsal of Princess Rabotkine's theatricals went off. I predict the affair will be a failure.

Jan. 2nd.—This annoying cold still keeps me from going out, and the only exercise I can get is a game of battledore and shuttlecock with little Fortunata, our agent's daughter. I don't know what I should do in wet weather without the loggia which runs round three sides of the courtyard, and is the most interesting feature of the villa, with its Renaissance arches, marble columns and great black beams that cross the ceiling. In the winter we put glass windows between the pillars and turn it into a closed corridor, heated and carpeted so that it forms part of the house;

but in the autumn it looks its best when the chrysanthemums and tea roses are in flower, and the lemons are beginning to ripen. Mother said it pleased her most in May, and she would make Gaetano place pots of iris all along the whitewashed wall. From the north side of the loggia a door opens into the long drawing-room, and from there one passes through a corner room we call the library, into the garden. My room is directly above. It has a beautiful view towards Vallombrosa in the distance on the left, and the furthest curves of the Arno on the right. Of course I have decorated my room very prettily, and, I think, in good taste. Mother wanted me to put a Morris paper on the walls, but I would not change the old-fashioned stucco, only to give warmth I have put up a dado of red Japanese matting, and hung some lustre and Rhodian plates with my sketches. These cover the walls so closely that if a Morris paper were there, it would be invisible.

About the furniture I have been very particular, though perhaps not so correct as I ought, for, instead of clinging to one style throughout, I have united them all. Thus my cabinet is not in keeping with my chairs; my screen does not go with my Dutch clock, nor the tapestry round the door with the Persian rugs. Yet in point of colour they all harmonize beautifully, for I have been very careful about that, and the effect is pleasing, though rather bewildering.

From outside, down in the road our house looks very imposing. It crowns the hill, which is covered with terraced vines and groups of olives, and the drive, bordered with laurestinus, seems to lead to a great place. But the villa, like so many others in Italy, is really a much less considerable place than it would lead the world to imagine. I call it an impostor, for when you have climbed up and walked round to the east side, where the terrace broadens out into the flower garden, you find nothing but a

picturesque collection of windows, chimneys, and buttresses which in no way carry out the grandeur of the façade.

Behind the house runs a broad walk that ends in a clump of ilexes and a sundial. That is a favourite spot to which we always take visitors.

Jan. 3rd.—My cold is really a great deal worse, and, though I don't like coddling, I must stay at home to-day after Godwin's lecture on my imprudence in going out in the rain to try on my dress. However, it fitted well. I have just read over my first entry, and I find it trivial and stiff. I must try to be more minute and painstaking.

Let me begin by drawing my own portrait as well as I can. I am five foot six and three quarters in height, and my waist is twenty-one inches when I don't squeeze. My hands and feet are rather too large, and my nose too small to be classical. My eyes are grey with points of copper in them, which change colour in different lights, sometimes they nearly match my

hair, which, in front, is of the shade (I have been told) of a sun-ripened apricot, while behind it is darker, and instead of being curly, grows long and straight. My strongest points are my complexion and teeth.

My tastes and accomplishments are various. I can dance and ride. I can sing Tosti's songs and Tuscan "Stornelli," and before I took to the guitar I could perform with a good deal of brio on the pianoforte. When I studied drawing in Von Alphen's class he declared I should go far if only I persevered. But I have never taken that talent of mine seriously. I can caricature and paint wild flowers, that is all.

As for languages, they can hardly be considered an accomplishment in a city where everyone chatters in four or five. But though I have no ear for fine shades, nor the imitative power of some people in attaining or appearing to attain perfection in a foreign tongue, I am generally fluent

and correct with a certain melodious English accent which Italians profess to admire greatly. I take to myself no particular praise for this, because I have been carefully taught, and anyone who is not a blockhead could do as much. At actual learning I am not very quick, but my memory is to be trusted. This partly accounts for my power of speaking good English, which few of my friends who have lived long in Florence can do. I, however, was fortunate in having mother as an example. It was a pleasure to listen to the conversation, so seriously gay and so original, which flowed from her, when in the humour, without an effort or momentary pause in words which rang as true as a bell. It must have been her individual way of looking at things and a vocabulary founded on a very serious early education that gave her this power.

Now to describe my character will not be quite so easy a task as writing down the colour of my eyes and the size of my waist.

In the first place because I have a tendency to consider my faults as the exaggeration of my virtues, and secondly because an only child never has a real chance in early life of comparing herself with others.

Let me begin then with my faults, and give them in a scientific way.

Vanity, 50°/₀.
Ambition, 40°/₀.
Divers, 10°/₀.

I am vain of my appearance and of my talents in so many different directions, and still vainer of my strength of purpose. I believe there are few things I could not accomplish if I really cared to attempt them. Until now, however, I have not found anything worth pushing further than the furthest point reached by the cleverest of my friends; as soon as I feel myself in advance of the rest I give up at once, for I say to myself: "Why go on? A race is just as well won by a neck as by a length." Of course this is wrong. There is much

(though I seem to have only just found it out) that is worth doing for its own sake.

This is a great weakness, and yet I am extremely ambitious. Ambition—I love that word! The only characters in history I really admire are ambitious ones. All great men and great women have been so, though many among them have tried to conceal it. Is it then a fault? After these two monsters which between them make up 90°/₀ of my failings, the rest are insignificant. I am a trifle egoistic, perhaps, a trifle pert, a trifle wayward, etc., etc., but all in a lesser degree. I am boisterous and impatient of reproof. Some of my friends say that I am fond of trampling on the feelings of others, but that, I maintain, is not true.

Then of my virtues, what shall I say? They are such a numerous body that I must treat them summarily. I am frank, I say what I think always and to everyone, and I like others to do the same by me. I am a good friend and a good enemy, for hate in my opinion is just as important as

love. I am affectionate, especially towards children and animals, and always active and energetic. I suppose, too, I might call myself generous, for I can never pass a beggar without giving him a trifle. At Christmas I make plenty of presents to people who I think ought to have them, and besides that I have several pensioners —old men and old women, lunatics and cripples—quite a band.

Of course one gets a good deal of fun out of it all, and a considerable share of self importance, but I do not pose on those occasions as "Lady Bountiful," for that sort of thing disgusts me, though, whenever I give anything I like to do it with my own hand instead of sending it in an envelope by a servant.

In many matters I am rather thrifty, I think. My dresses are always good, but I never go beyond a certain price, and never have more than I can wear. I keep my accounts as mother did, and put down every penny that I spend. I have had

such practice in this that I now never make a mistake. Since I was fifteen I have been housekeeper, and made myself respected by the servants, so that it seldom happens that anything goes wrong.

Thus I have lightly touched on my characteristics, and it only remains to be said that I am seldom troubled with the blues. Wherever I am I always contribute to the fun. This accounts for the large number of invitations I receive.

But lest it might appear that I am describing myself as a very fascinating person, let me say, for the sake of truth, that all these qualities are overshadowed by the two Upas trees of ambition and vanity to such an extent as to make some evilly-disposed persons declare me to be a mass of self-assertive arrogance. If this were entirely true I might feel hurt! but as it is not I only laugh.

Jan. 6th.—My last effort of penmanship exhausted me so much that I have not had courage enough to write for some days,

but now that my cold has gone and I have seen enough of people to last me for some time, I will write up my diary again.

Signor Galvagna has given me some new Russian songs. He says they are good music and effective. Yesterday Marjorie Mackworth came to lunch, and afterwards we went into the billiard room and pretended to play, while I extracted from her an account of what the new set of Florentine philosophers are doing. It was exceedingly amusing, for she takes everything so seriously, and appears really to believe that all their little fads and fancies are going to have a direct influence on the destinies of the world. She told me that she and Eva Clough (who writes under the name of "Cooper Holt") often go to the hospital and spend several hours there, pottering about, not with the object of nursing the poor people, as I naïvely imagined, but to study psychology. She says that nothing can be more interesting than the manifestations of physical and mental emotions she observes

there—that it is like a battlefield, only far more exciting because the subjects are of both sexes, and then there is no gunpowder. She spoke so vehemently that I was quite surprised, for she is a little mite of a girl, slim and slender, with large eyes and an imploring manner. She went on to say that she and Eva intend to continue their studies all the winter, going from half past eight till mid-day three times a week, and that Eva, who is stronger than she is, hopes to induce the authorities to allow her to be present at operations. If so she will study enough anatomy to understand the physical conditions of the cases she wishes to observe. When I expressed a desire to know Eva she said, "Well, if you don't know Eva Clough you surely know 'Cooper Holt.'" Then she added, "I must ask her to let me introduce you. You have a great treat before you if you have not yet read her—she is a revelation."

"Cooper," as Majorie always calls her, is, according to her description, one of the

most intellectually endowed women in the world. Her books, historical and literary criticisms, novels and essays, are more modern than anything which has lately appeared outside of Paris.

Before Marjorie went I questioned her about her own way of work, and she told me that even in that she studies originality. "Cooper," she thinks, stands over her subject too much. She is always too near and photographic. In the ward she takes down her notes—shorthand—just as things strike her, without paying enough attention to the surroundings. She herself, on the other hand, goes too far in the opposite direction. "I observe," she said, "almost as keenly as 'Cooper,' but I wait some hours before writing, and then generally at bedtime I make a *résumé* of my morning's work. My windows look on the terrace, you know. When I create I draw back the curtains and write by moonlight. It's so gay," she added, with a sweet smile.

Marjorie is very good company, but she is sometimes very gruesome.

Jan. 7th. I had a delightful ride this morning with dear old Mr. Humphreys. He amused me with hunting recollections and the account of his eldest son's transgressions—always a favourite topic with elderly gentlemen. Jacky Humphreys used to be a nice boy, but I hear he has grown conceited since he joined his regiment. Coming back Daisy shied and nearly threw me. In a cab I thought I saw "Cooper Holt's" pale face, but perhaps I was mistaken. Major Bruce and two or three tiresome middle-aged ladies called in the afternoon, and later on some Italians came up for "the five o'clock" as they call it. There are to be three more mixed marriages this winter, the men being Florentines and the women American.

News from England that Cuthbert is engaged to a Miss Farquharson. He has sent me her photograph—such a pretty girl!

Jan. 10th.—Went last evening to a party

at the Galvagna's to meet Mr. Robert March. The lion of the evening was in very good trim, and I enjoyed the privilege of eating an ice with him. Our conversation is not worth recording, except that of course I told him I had read all his novels from beginning to end without skipping a page. He is a quiet, middle-aged man who can talk well if he will.

Small evenings are a form of party I generally enjoy. At the Galvagna's one always meets clever people and hears some good music well performed. Signor Galvagna has a beautiful touch.

January 24th.—I have been out a good deal lately and that has made me lazy. I wonder what Claude Doucet would say! It is evident that I am not yet up to his standard. Tho other evening I heard Signor Galvagna talking with Eva, whose acquaintance I have now made, about a novel he is engaged on. It must be amusing to write a novel and put one's friends into it. The only drawback is that they would certainly recognize themselves and probably be annoyed.

Jan. 26th.—The idea of a novel is still running in my head. I should like to try one. Perhaps though it would be better to consult some authority before beginning.

Jan. 29th.—Still thinking of the novel I wish to write. Last evening at the Villa

Stella I took possession of Mr. March, and we went for a turn in the covered loggia. I began with asking his pardon for talking "shop" and then told him what I was dying to do. When once I had started the hare, I let him chase it. He was so nice about it, and encouraging, and talked so well that it filled me with admiration. He said that it was all a question of talent to begin with. You either can write or you can't. (I can! I said to myself). Then, supposing you to have good taste, style, knowledge of the world, industry, originality and many other qualities, there comes the question of subject. "That is the block," he said, "over which many young talents have stumbled." I sighed softly, and he continued. "They have stumbled because they generally chose to write upon subjects with which they are not thoroughly familiar. Of course," he added, "I am not speaking of giants like Thackeray, whose insight was so fine that he could create legions of typical figures from observations made through his club

window. Study the people and things about you—try to know them so thoroughly that, when you write about them, you can, as accurately as possible, tell what they would say, think, and do under any given condition. With one or two good types well studied you can do marvels : and you have this advantage here in Florence, dear young lady ; at your door is a vast cosmopolitan assemblage such as you would scarcely find elsewhere—strange contrasts and incongruities, all in that beautiful setting," waving his hand over the valley towards the city where the dawn was just beginning to light up the Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio. How sympathetic he is! I shall begin to work at once.

Jan. 30th. This morning I sketched out three plots, and then destroyed them, they seemed so commonplace.

February 2nd.—I am really in despair. Nothing seems to go. I can get on well enough for half an hour, and then a figure out of some tale I have lately read comes

into my mind, and I unconsciously begin to copy it. Yesterday I described myself talking to a man just as Miss Dalton makes her heroines talk—that is, rather saucily. Perhaps to-morrow luck will change.

Feb. 3rd—Alas! alas!

Feb. 4th. . . . .

Feb. 5th.—Niente!

Feb. 6th.—I began on a fresh sheet this morning, and everything went smoothly till I heard Jacky barking in the garden, and saw him flying full tilt after the stable cat. I opened the window and called to him sharply to come away, but as he wouldn't, I ran down and chased him over the flower beds. Of course he thought this fine fun, and a long chase he gave me until I caught and carried him into the butler's pantry and imprisoned him there. But strange to say, when I came back to my work, not one line could I write. I was in despair at myself and my stupidity. This will never do, I said, I am on the wrong path. Something desperate must happen. I never was so

put out by anything before. Presently a bright idea occurred to me. Let me fly off and see Eva Clough. Did I not hear her only the other evening expounding her ideas at great length to Signor Galvagna? No doubt she will be able to give me some practical advice.

I found her very busy with books and papers all about her, and she welcomed me with a forced smile. I saw that I was not altogether welcome at that hour.

"Dear Miss Clough," I said, "I have come to disturb you for a few moments. I want your advice."

"It is yours in advance."

"What I want to know in a few words is, how to set about writing a story or a novel. I am so anxious to try!"

She drew herself up.

"I have my own way," she cried, "but it is entirely individual and unlike anyone else's. It would probably not suit *you*." (With a small dash under the you.)

"I meant to say," I broke in, "can you

not point out to me what an inexperienced person like myself should aim at! How the beginning should be made, and whether you think I should try and introduce into it more than one important figure. I am really perplexed and confused. That must be my excuse for interrupting you in your work. If you could spare me the time I should be greatly obliged."

"Have you anything with you? Any sketches of character, any special studies?"

"No," I said, "I have torn up everything."

She smiled, and then, after musing for a while, said with rather a pained expression as she nibbled her pen: "If you really are in earnest I would advise you to begin by sketching as fully as possible the people you meet in your set, if you find them interesting. Put down all you know of their habits and characters, and then draw your own conclusions. Take them one by one without grouping them—that will be the easiest way."

"But I have done that already," I eagerly

explained, "and the result appeared to me commonplace and uninteresting. The people I know have all been described a hundred times over in three volume novels. There seems to be nothing new to be said about them. Perhaps, though, it is my own dulness. I suppose if I could see them in a new light they would appear more genuine. Of course when one has been accustomed to judge things and persons in exactly the same way as everyone else judges them, it is rather difficult to change. When I begin to write I feel fettered by what I have already heard and read, and all that I scribble myself seems only an echo of what everyone else thinks. Isn't it annoying,—to wish to be oneself and to end by being everybody else!"

As I said all this and a great deal more besides which would be too long to write, I really felt so exasperated that I could have cried. More than anything else Eva's manner irritated me—she appeared so self-possessed and patronising. I suppose I

showed what I was feeling, for she said in a changed manner, such as one might use to a spoilt child :

"It was really naughty of you to destroy your manuscripts. You must bring some with you another time. We will work at them together, and if there are any little faults, well, it won't be hard to correct them."

I shrugged my shoulders and looked up at the ceiling. To fancy myself sitting by her side like a schoolgirl, while she underlined my mistakes with a red pencil ! All I wanted from her was something definite about the way to set to work. I could trust myself for the rest.

"Then would you advise me to begin with a single character and make it go as far as I can ?"

"Perhaps I was wrong to advise you at all. We should follow our own inclinations in writing as much as in dressing." (As she said this, I noticed that she glanced at my cloak with the fox lining, and I looked back at her costume, which was not even tidy.)

"All novelists of reputation have begun in their own way, from Scott and Balzac downwards, and in the end have imposed themselves on the world."

"Like Miss Dalton," I put in rather spitefully.

"Oh!" she exclaimed with a toss of the head, "I didn't mean that world!"

She said this in such a singularly unpleasant way that I jumped up, and making a hurried excuse for having disturbed her, walked out of the room. She came after me into the hall where Jacky was waiting, and I got out of the house as fast as I could, having achieved nothing. I intend never to go to her again! I feel the strongest antipathy for her. I shall write something good if only to spite her.

Feb. 7th.—That interview with Eva seems to have paralyzed me. I don't feel half so confident as I did a few days ago. I shall go for a walk.

Feb. 8th.—A letter from Eva last evening. Rather nice.

"Dear Miss Colville-Daw,

"A severe headache has prevented me from coming to see you before, or even writing to tell you how much your visit and the project you described, have interested me. I have been considering your case from every point of view, and, although I should be loath to give you positive advice, as more likely to do harm than good, by diverting your talent into unnatural channels, I can still, I believe, be of service to you by pointing out *what is to be avoided* in writing. You spoke of a course of reading to be pursued alongside of your work. I have drawn up this list of books for you: 'Journal d'Amiel;' 'Lettres à une Inconnue' (Merimée); 'Le Curé de Tours' (Balzac); and 'Anna Karenine' (Tolstoi). I will call to-morrow morning and talk with you further than I was able to do when surprised by your early visit.

"Yours truly,

"EVA CLOUGH.

"P.S. Perhaps it would be better to substitute 'La Guerre et la Paix,' for 'Anna Karenine,' if you are particular about what you read. They are both excellent examples of the Russian School."

This letter is a surprise to me. Perhaps Eva had got out from the wrong side of her bed when I called on Monday morning. I feel inclined now to think better of her—a good kernel, perhaps, inside a prickly shell. One must make every allowance for people who really work. All the same, I know I shall never like her. First impressions go a long way with me, and I feel when I am with her that she overshadows me, and I know I shall feel this always. Marjorie Mackworth, on the other hand, makes me feel brighter and more clever.

Feb. 9th.—Eva Clough came and talked with me the whole morning. She seems to be one of those persons who, like some horses, start with difficulty, but once set

going, gallop "ventre à terre." However, she was most interesting, and though I could not follow all she said, I gleaned a great deal of information. She told me (as far as I can render it in her own words) that the modern tendency in literature and art is towards realism, and that a romance need not now-a-days depend upon its plot. That the best and most appreciated novels are based upon "subtle gradations of individual character appropriately arranged in the framework of a given society."

"Intellectual work" (she used the word "intellectual" continually) "of a superior quality alone commands fame in these days, though, grievous to say, it does not always insure so high a pecuniary success as much vivacious pot-boiling."

"If you wish for that," she said, "though there is no reason why you should, since you are not working for your living, you ought to consider what class of people would be interested in your writing, and try to please the greatest number; but if

you aspire to higher things, then you must put your shoulder to the wheel in earnest. Practically I would advise you to be always at work. I don't, of course, mean you to nail yourself to your desk, but to be for ever exercising your powers of observation and reason, and when anything strikes you (as a thousand things will when you once begin), to jot it down quickly on the spot either in your memory, if you possess a good one, or in your commonplace book. In time the amount of raw material you will have collected will startle you. I have at home a stack of notes so big that it would almost fill that lemon house of yours. It is the rough gold which I can beat out at my will. So much for the outside of things! If you wish to go deeper and pry into the whys and the wherefores, there is no limit assignable to the amount of your studies. For my part I would not advise you to attempt scientific psychology, it would give you a nightmare. But you might put into play the strong penetration

which I see you possess, and worry their secrets out of your models. Remember this, that behind the outward appearance—the mask I might call it—of every man, woman and child, and even cat or dog, lie an inconceivable number of original impulses, which at some time in their careers come to light; that these are often so twisted in and out of one another that they resemble nothing so much as (you will pardon me I am sure—I can think of no better simile) the entrails of animals one sees hanging up in a slaughter house. It is upon these complicated and often conflicting passions that the skilful novelist works, tearing off the mask which convention (and very properly so) obliges us to wear, and studying, meditating upon and finally understanding what lies below. Without this his characters would be but poor vapid posturing creatures without stamina or nervous force, fit only for a waxwork show, or a booth of puppets.

"It used to be considered a principle of

art that the writer should keep his company well in hand, that is to say, permit them no action or dialogue that would detract from the beforehand rigidly determined character of each. No more faulty principle than this was ever invented. You need only glance over the tragedies of Alfieri to satisfy yourself how glacial his personages appear. I doubt very much whether we should ever have thoroughly rid ourselves of these restraints—these odious insensate forms—had not science and psychology come to the rescue and routed the classics on the one hand, and the romanticists on the other, permitting some of us at least to unravel the inconsistencies and marvellous surprises of human nature.

"But while all this is highly encouraging to everyone who longs for perfection, it demands a far larger tribute of labour and intelligence. Authors who take themselves seriously, cannot sit down now-a-days enjoying life. The Novelist, besides being a man of the closet, must be a man

of action. With restless activity and zeal he must throw himself, note-book in hand, into all the passions of his age and trace them back to their source. He must understand society, not in one, but in every form. You yourself can well imagine how immeasurably greater is the field. Well, I tell you your mental equipment must correspond to the strain laid upon it. You must develop all your powers. Unless you have a sound method, nothing can save you from cutting a sorry figure in the eyes of the profession. Look! I will give you an example. Look at that white villa on the left bank of the Arno! There sits Rolla probably at this moment scribbling as fast as pen can fly over foolscap. Consider her work! Consider her position in the world of letters! She is a laughing stock! A by-word! I know these are hard words—too hard perhaps—but none the less true. Ask yourself why, and the answer will be—because she is not a seeker after truth. And this is all the

more striking because such artistic power, such power of pathos and scorn induce a passing admiration for her travesties of human nature.

"Do I seem to you too authoritative? No! I see you follow me. Yet having gone so far I hesitate—I fear the force of my own words. What does it mean in your case? To you who have lived all your life in an enchanted garden, from whom all the dark problems of humanity are as distant as one planet from another? What does it mean to you if you should seek to put into practice this passionate, remorseless search for truth?

"It seems so much of all that turns life from repose into struggle, that I, with all my devotion, would say, *Stop! Beware!*

"And do not think that my motives are unworthy, or that I am holding up my own example as a warning. You have come to me frankly for advice, and I should be contemptible if I did not as frankly give it you. Between us two there can be no

possible analogy. Social and physical conditions divide us at the start. What to me, in spite of all its drawbacks, has become my real life, can never be the same to you, be your success what it may.

"To be a great author is a glorious thing. But at what price is that renown too often bought! Certainly to some of us artists and writers it matters little how deep we dive below the surface of knowledge. I say it matters little, because Nature, when she formed us, mixed a something in our clay which resembles madness.

"I am content—nay, inconceivably proud of my calling. It has given me a keen intellectual existence to fill up every void.

"But you—what have you to do with all these miseries? Are you unhappy, slighted by the world, and poor, that you should wish to take your pen to extort recognition and success? No! You have everything, I repeat, everything—everything that I had not, have not, and never shall have.

You have everything and for always. Yes, for always. You are loved because nature meant you to be loved, and you merit it without any effort or any sacrifice. And I, with all my success, where am I in comparison? When my poor life measures itself with yours, where is it—where is it, I say? Oh God! How intolerably hard things are! How bitter I am, and how weak!"

As she said this, Eva flung herself on the sofa and sobbed aloud. I was not quite unprepared for this climax. From the commencement she had left her seat and paced the room, occasionally stopping before me, who remained seated, and, as she went on, her voice had risen and had lost that strangely judicial tone that is habitual to her. The sight of several objects in my room had moved her. When she was describing the duties of a modern novelist, she had stopped suddenly before my long mirror, and continued nervously apostrophising herself, then turning abruptly

away, she had snatched up my tortoiseshell fan and waved it in the air. In the end she had so worked herself up, that I was quite uncomfortable, and when she at last gave way, I went to her and comforted her as well as I could. But it was a difficult task, and I am quite unaccustomed to such scenes. I did the best I could, and then rang and ordered up some wine, and forced her to drink it.

Before she went she begged me to excuse the agitation she had shown. Poor Eva! Her nerves are not at all strong, and she has overworked herself lately. She has invited me to her Monday evenings. I shall make a point of going.

Feb. 10th.—I have thought a great deal over what Eva said yesterday, and the conclusion I have come to is to do nothing in a hurry. What she said was well said as far as it went, but in spite of the air she has of reading my inmost thoughts, she cannot really appreciate the strength of my ambition. She evidently considers me just an ordinary young lady in society, fitted only for pleasure, and aiming at making a good marriage. I did not at all like the way she summed up my advantages, leaving out, as though they did not exist, a great number of my best qualities. But then, who in the world was ever contented with the judgment of others!

Feb. 12th.—Last evening at the Galvagnas I met a portly, red-faced, white

waistcoated old gentleman just returned from Egypt, where he had been arranging the Khedive's affairs. They say he began life as a pit boy, taught himself to write, then to read, and then probably to add up sums, for he is now worth three millions. I had a long chat with him; he knows the most practical way of doing everything, from working a mine to launching an Opera company. He says the future of Italy is assured if only she will make up her mind to banish the Pope, and that before the middle of the next century (rather a long way to look forward) she will be a first-rate manufacturing country. I must say I have a weakness for self-made men, even though their manners are not always so refined as they might be. Only to think of what they have passed through is enough to shame us, who have done nothing all our lives. I notice that large heads are a characteristic of successful men. I must measure mine—twenty-three inches.

Feb. 13th.—A tiresome day full of tiresome nothings.

Feb. 14th.—Got up very early and wrote six pages in my commonplace book—criticism on my own state of mind, and on the peculiar sensation of coming away from yesterday's afternoon party in a bad temper. Filled up the rest with a minute description of Jacky, his mental characteristics and his probable ideals; compared his devotion to me with his mistrust for Mimi, the stable cat.

Feb. 15th.—Marjorie came and I told her of my interview with Eva. She says that no words can describe "Cooper's" power of will and devotion to her calling; that what she accomplishes is superhuman in its intense mental effort, and that she considers her nothing short of a heroine. Marjorie herself is a sweet little person full of half serious tender fancies. She is enthusiastic and very pliable. Eva has made her adopt most of her views, and the result is a curious mixture of modern and

sixteenth century feeling that is incongruous and interesting. She reminds me of a tiny bird warbling on a telegraph wire. She has written a great deal, ever since she could hold a pen, and has formed a style for herself on the model of the Elizabethans. She keeps herself entirely by her work, and that gives her a decided, quite professional manner (which I like) of talking about books. It shows that she has thought about them, and considers them—well, things to be pondered over, and written, and then to be bought and sold. When she said that she worked only for the "Autumn publishing season" I gave a start, it seemed so strange coming from that poetical little being. And then, too, the passionate exclusive way she talks of literature, as though the world were occupied with that and nothing else. Indeed, she seems to have divided people into two distinct parties—those who write and those who don't. Well, I wonder if I shall ever get myself to think so too.

Perhaps, when I am talked of by my "nom de plume."

Feb. 20th.—I went to a garden party yesterday at the Baretti's. There was such an odd looking Englishman there, a Mr. Braithwaite. The hostess introduced him to me saying that as we were fellow country people we ought to know one another, though I don't know why we should be obliged to know the thousand and one roaming Englishmen who pass through Florence. However, I found him amusing. He appears to have travelled a good deal, and I afterwards heard that he talks of settling in Italy.

Feb. 26th.—I am very busy just now, and both Eva and Marjorie, besides Signor Galvagna, come to see me continually when I cannot go to them. They have read all I have written, for I conceal nothing, not even my least successful efforts, and they say that I shall do something really good in a short time. I am going to read again the "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Robinson

Crusoe" as the first of a course of books that will include "Gulliver's Travels," "Pamela," "Tristram Shandy," and "Tom Jones." This is to improve my style, which is inclined to be too flowery. I also hope to find time for the collected speeches of John Bright.

Feb. 28th.—I wrote three hours yesterday, three and a half the day before, and as much the day before that. It comes quite easily to me now. All my latest attempts have been in the form of special studies either of individuals, animals or landscapes. I have quite given up the idea of a novel for the present. Eva strongly urges me not to attempt one until I have got further. She likes the sketch of Annetta, our Siennese cook, which I made down in the kitchen one wet afternoon, and another of the peasants ploughing their field at sunrise. She praised the goodwill I had shown in getting up so early, and declared that, as she read she could smell the fresh steaming earth and see the threads of saliva waving from the muzzles of the oxen!

March 2nd.—Yesterday as I was walking out of the Porta Romana with Cousin Bertha we were nearly run over by a four-in-hand. The driver had a white hat and tie and a red flower in his button hole and a reddish face. I recognized the Mr. Braithwaite I had met at the Baretti's. There was no one else on the drag but a groom. The near wheeler had several stripes on his dark coat and all the horses were foaming at the mouth. Mr. Braithwaite bowed to me. I wonder whether he is going to live in Florence.

March 8th.—A note from "Cooper" this morning. She says:—

"My Dear Miss Colville-Daw,

"Pray do not fail me on Monday evening, as I am expecting Mr. Braithwaite, who is stopping in Florence a few weeks. You must meet him, for he is in every respect a *rara avis*.

"Yours,

"EVA CLOUGH."

To this I returned the following answer:—

"Dear Miss Clough,

"Being a bird myself, as my name shows, I shall be delighted to meet such a rare specimen of my race under your hospitable roof.

"Sincerely yours,
"OLYMPIA C. DAW.

"P.S. I have met Mr. Braithwaite already."

March 10th.—Nothing particular to relate. My mind is so occupied with my work that extraneous things teaze and worry me. I have fitted up a plain wooden desk in my morning room in the place of the escritoire that used to be there, finding that it is impossible to cultivate business and pleasure together. It cost me a pang to despoil my room, but it had to be done. One cannot concentrate one's ideas with invitation cards and engagement lists

staring one in the face ; besides, the escritoire, which is a fine old piece, had a way of creaking when I pressed on it in the fever of inspiration.

March 11th.—I have done a good morning's work and I feel very happy. I began at seven in my dressing gown, and worked away till half past eleven, with only half an hour's interval for my chocolate. My subject was founded on some notes taken at the Digby's "at home," and the situation was this:—Guido is in love with pretty Rose Dillon, and she likes him well enough to wish he would propose. His proud but poor family are dead against it because she has no money. He is weak, and changes his mind ten times a day. Added to this there are possible rivals in the field, who act upon him as stimulants and give her a great advantage. The world in general is divided in opinion as to the advisability of such a match, the elder and more worldly wise shaking their heads, while the young and giddy applaud. Such is the position

of affairs when they meet in Mrs. Digby's charming but small apartment where everyone is crowded on everyone else. Well, I describe them seated there on a sofa together in one of the little rooms through which all must pass to make the round, and I note the expressions of people when first they catch sight of this *tête-à-tête*, then the change of mental attitude in the lovers, and the way their conversation flags, the poltroonery which makes him wish to get away without appearing rude when he sees a great lady of his own set coming, and the reasons that make her endeavour to keep him there in spite of himself. Finally the clever way in which she snubs him by getting up with a little scornful laugh as another of her admirers appears and offers her his arm.

Into this I have thrown as a running accompaniment that reaches them from a further room, a song by Massenet, "Ouvre tes yeux bleus." I have never written before with such spirit. The ideas clothed themselves in just the right words, and the

whole scene appeared vividly before me so that it cost me no effort to describe it. My studies from nature have done me good. I shall send it to the Anglo-American Monthly and call it "In a Drawing-room." Perhaps they will take it.

I have now solemnly consecrated the hours between seven in the morning and mid-day to work. Nothing shall divert me from it or interfere. It is no sacrifice for me to do this, but rather a great and absorbing pleasure. Every day when work is over I look forward to the next, and I find the ideas which come to me as I write recurring to me over and over again, and distracting me when I am with people and ought to be making myself agreeable. I begin to understand now why it is that so many brilliant writers are such poor talkers and such dismal company in a general way. I should say that were society mainly composed of authors, it would be as dull as ditch water. Not a very amiable thing to say! Yet I, even though a beginner,

already feel the growing desire of drawing out the ideas of my friends while I save all my own good things for my note-books. I surprise myself looking upon people and things as "copy," and running after people a little picturesque or strange for the sake of studying them.

March 13th.—Miss Clough's evening went off very pleasantly. The house in which she lives with her family is small, so she cannot invite many people. She manages, however, to make her parties entertaining, and in a certain sense, select, by getting together only those who are in sympathy with letters or art. There were several pianists and some professional and amateur singers, the first of whom sing to her for nothing. I myself, although I do not often perform before an audience, sang towards the end of the evening, and better than usual, owing to the pleasant musical feeling that pervaded the party.

It was just in the middle of my song that Mr. Braithwaite, the lion of the even-

ing, made his appearance. In the mirror above the piano I saw him enter on tiptoe, and it almost put me out. Eva rose to meet him, and silently motioned him to an armchair, which she had kept vacant all the evening by her side. As soon as my song was over, I noticed that she introduced him to several people, and then drew him into what threatened to be a lengthy conversation; but after a few minutes I heard him say, "Ah! there is Miss Colville Daw, I must go and speak to her." So he came across the room and sat down near the piano.

"What a late comer you are," I said.

"To my great regret. I only heard half your song."

"But you missed also Mrs. Crawford and Minelli, that slight, romantic looking man who plays the violin. If I were Miss Clough I should scold you."

"You can't imagine how annoyed I am. But the reason is that my servant had put away my things and gone off to amuse

himself, so when I came home from the station at half past nine, nothing was ready."

While we were talking, Eva came, and without ceremony, whisked him off to the supper room. As they walked away I heard him say loudly—"What a beautiful voice! Yes. I met her a day or two ago."

When I was putting on my things to go, Signor Galvagna, who was escorting me to the carriage, said:

"Well, what do you think of him?"

"Of Mr. Braithwaite? I rather like him."

"He seems to feel the same about you. He was writhing to get away from 'Cooper' to talk to you. She noticed it, too, and was annoyed."

Down stairs, as we stood in the hall waiting for the brougham, we heard the drawing-room door upstairs quickly opened, and Eva's voice saying loudly:

"Then it's *au revoir*, and don't forget. Any day between five and half past," and then his reply—

"Without fail, and with the greatest pleasure."

Thereupon I jumped into the brougham and was just putting up the window when I felt it held down, and saw the street lamp reflected upon the hand of Mr. Braithwaite.

"Just in time to say good-night, Miss Daw, and to thank you again."

"For what?" I said, feigning astonishment.

"For the pleasure of hearing you sing, and for this charming evening which——"

"Thank Miss Clough," I said, "for that, any day between five and half past." Saying this, I jerked up the window and pulled the check and off we went, leaving the "rara avis" on the pavement looking more like a goose than a swan.

March 25th.—It was so warm this morning that I took my books and writing things into the east garden and sat there. When I came in I found a great bunch of spring flowers propped up on the table.

There was no card with it, and Pasquale did not know who had sent it. He only knows that it had been left at the lodge, and that the people there had not inquired the name of the sender. So stupid of them, but more so of my unknown friend to hide his light under a bushel. Who can it be? I think I can guess. The afternoon post brought me an invitation to lunch with the Clarkes on the second, which I shall accept. Also a note from Eva, asking me to give her a lift, for she is lunching there too.

April 1st.—Little time for graver pursuits. Three lunches and two balls this week, besides a box at the "Niccolini" with dear Mme. de Rabanine. She is the very nicest woman in Florence, in fact, the one woman I should care to be. I wonder how she manages to bleach her hair so perfectly.

April 3rd.—I am a good deal depressed with my drive with Eva from the Clarke's luncheon party. She always jars upon my

nerves, and I feel the effects for two or three days after. She is so oracular and sublime, that nothing I can say has the least weight with her. Then conversation is impossible with a person who is always riding some new hobby. Our drive home lasted more than an hour, and that is a long time to be shut up in a closed carriage with a doctrinaire. She began with a short lecture on wild flowers and then settled (as I felt sure see would) on the subject of Mr. Braithwaite.

"You know," she said, "that here in Florence many of us may be said to live in a Fool's Paradise, surrounded by friends and followers who unconsciously develop themselves on lines that converge to the same point."

"What point?" I asked.

"Futility," she replied peevishly, as though I had broken through her train of thought and should have known better. I saw she intended to have it all her own way, so I held my tongue and she con-

tinued as the carriage rolled swiftly back to Florence.

"Yes! we are narrow, and above all selfish. In the midst of a society which has no duties beyond that of amusing itself in the most graceful way possible, we fly, such of us who can, to severe intellectual work, and study philosophy and ethics, or write treatises on the history of a people that no foreigner can ever fully understand. At all points we are thrown back upon ourselves, on our own importance and self esteem."

"How true!" I thought, but I said nothing, and she continued musingly:

"Of course it might be said that we can buy books and keep ourselves in touch with what is passing in the great centres of thought. That is true; but it is not thoughts we need: we have enough of them—too many, perhaps. What we really require is contact with hardy, robust natures and friction with busy life. I keenly felt all these cravings last August when Madge

Kerison was telling me of her work in the Sailors' Home at Devonport, and now that Mr. Braithwaite——" she stopped short.

"Does he go in for philanthropy?" I asked.

"He!" she said in a surprised tone.

"In England even such men as he affect a considerable interest in the working classes," I was beginning, when she cut me short.

"Mr. Braithwaite is a problem as yet unsolved. I am devoting myself to him, and he quite baffles me. I have thrown up all my plans with the object of having my time free for this purpose. He has promised me the box seat of his drag to-morrow for a morning drive in the Cascine. I cannot tell you how I am looking forward to it. I have never yet been on a drag."

"Oh," I said, rather superciliously, "it's rather nice."

"It must be," she answered. "To me it will be a novelty of the deepest interest.

When he knows you better he may invite you."

"Thank you," I replied, rather nettled. "I don't think cousin Bertha would ever let me go."

There was silence for a few minutes as the carriage flew over a network of tramway lines, which made talking difficult.

"Shall you think me very fast?" she asked with a delighted expression as she got out in the Via Tournabuoni.

"Very!" I said, "quite shockingly!"

Eva lets everyone see her cards. I will not put myself into competition with her, but I will let her see that I am not quite so unimportant as she seems to think. Can she really imagine that she will absorb Mr. Braithwaite? It seems too ridiculous, and yet she speaks of him as though he were her own special property to be approached only through her. Infatuation is no name for it. He seems rather nice from her account. I am positive that he sent me the bouquet.

April 8th.—How well Mdme. de Rabanine looked last night, and how I admire her finished manners! She reminds me of dear mother, though she is much more of a cosmopolitan and speaks French without an accent. Wherever she is, she is always surrounded by the best people. I mean the *really* nice people, and they appear to consider her as their chief. Such a position is most enviable, and only to be attained by tact, charm, and real goodness of heart. I hear that she devotes herself entirely to Prince Rabanine when he is laid up, but that does not prevent her from keeping her friends near her by writing to them daily. She is very good to me.

April 18th.—A great number of callers, among them Marjorie brimming over with

news and drollery. This fresh departure of "Cooper's" amuses her immensely. She says she met her in town after the famous drive wearing a horse-shoe pin and talking of nothing but Mr. Braithwaite.

"You have heard his story, of course?" Marjorie inquired of me. "It is all over Florence."

"I only know that he is of humble origin and that he became suddenly rich. Is he English or American?"

"He is both," she laughed, "and that is why he appeals to us all. He is a real modern hero, such as Robert March dreams of. Listen! I will tell you what I have heard from 'Cooper.'

"His father was an English coast-guardsman, and George ran away from home when he was twelve years old, as all boys do. For two years he was a cabin boy, and then he ran away again. After unheard of privations in America, he finally found himself in a run in Texas, where for ten years he fought with Indians and lassoed buffaloes,

until, disappointed with the result, he joined a party of filibusters on the Mexican frontier, and at one time had made as much as sixteen thousand dollars by plunder. He was soon robbed of it, however, and had to begin again.

During all these years he had scarcely any news from home. His family thought him such a black sheep. At last one day when he was beginning to despair, and was lying in his hut very sick with low fever, a letter reached him telling him that he was wanted in England, and then another telling him that his uncle, who had been a merchant in Liverpool, had left him all his money, and that he was a millionaire; and the odd part of the story was, that he had never in his life seen this uncle, and that his cousins, who had been as virtuous as the day, were to get nothing at all. All these cousins and their families came to meet him at Southampton when he arrived in a return emigrant ship, and he put on his Mexican costume before landing, and used

the worst language he could think of—to shock them, you know—at the dinner he gave them, and then presented them with ten thousand pounds apiece."

"What a strange Arabian Nights' Story," I said. "But I don't see what Eva finds in it. It is not in her line at all."

"Oh, that's just the wildness of it," cried Marjorie lackadaisically. "She now pretends to be eclectic: she asserts that she is madly infatuated with him, and so is he, it appears, with her. They see one another every day, and she takes him through the galleries and explains the Umbrian School to him (she is an authority on the Umbrian School, you know,) and is trying to induce him to buy that 'Holy Family' by Perugino that belongs to Carlo Gatti."

"What!" I said. "That daub that Sir John would not even look at?"

"Yes, you know how warmly 'Cooper' espouses a cause, even a doubtful one. Well, she has staked her reputation on that picture. She declares, she swears that it

has all the internal evidence of authenticity. When she is positive about a thing, argument is useless."

"But about Mr. Braithwaite, do you think it serious?"

"Chi lo sa? It is certain that she will meet him half way."

"Half way! Three quarters! On his own threshold, I should say."

Marjorie looked astonished.

"'Cooper Holt' has a great reputation," she answered briefly—"world-wide almost. With wealth at her command and a docile husband, she would certainly attempt great things. She is not mercenary, but she perceives as clearly as anyone the advantages of power, and would accept all its responsibilities. Her dream has always been to endow a chair for the study of Modern Greek, but I think she might go beyond that and found an Academy of Belles Lettres, which, in time would rival the French one. To think of that creature spending so

much on his horses! Do you find him sympathetic?"

"I? oh yes, that is to say, I hardly know him, and I never judge by first impressions. He seems very different to the common run of men, and so in a way interesting; but we shall meet him often, no doubt, this winter, unless Miss Clough keeps him quite close to her, and then—"

At that moment the door opened and the servant announced Mr. Braithwaite. Marjorie and I started. In another moment he was standing before us in a tight frock coat and an orchid in his buttonhole. In the dim light, for it was almost six o'clock, he looked vast and rather shapeless.

"Call the Signora and bring the lamps, Francesco," I said; "my cousin will be very pleased to see you, Mr. Braithwaite."

He flung himself down in an armchair, and before replying looked round the room, taking in as much as the twilight allowed.

"What a finely proportioned room," he remarked.

"I never noticed it before, but now you say so, it strikes me too."

"Ah, those old Guelph families knew how to build," he said jauntily.

"But this was built by a Ghibelline Baron."

"Oh, well, it's all the same nowadays." (Marjorie gave me a look.) "It's only the setting now of the jewel it holds. Did some flowers reach you? I sent them, intending to follow myself at once. In fact I should have liked to come with them to lay them at your feet."

As he said this, I did what I had never in my life done before, I actually blushed at his outrageous compliments. In the twilight no one could see it, but all the same I felt uneasy and shy, and so to turn the conversation I said:

"You were occupied with other things no doubt. I heard you were at the Pitti."

"Yes," he said, "I am going through a course, and I hope to come out knowing all one can know of your Florentine

Galleries. I have an excellent guide, philosopher and friend."

"In Miss Clough," Marjorie put in.

"Yes, in Miss Clough," he replied, turning round suspiciously. "She has undertaken to hold the leading strings. I am afraid she will find me a dull pupil, with no head for all the dates she gives me to learn. She is a wonderful well read woman. A perfect encyclopedia. How do you do, Mrs. Inglis?"

As my cousin came in, I went into the corridor with Marjorie and put on her cloak for her.

"He is a Philistine, but you and 'Cooper' could mould him," she said.

"I leave him entirely in her hands."

"But he would prefer to be left in yours."

"Don't be silly."

"Good night, darling," she said, impulsively kissing me. "You will make me your confidant, won't you?"

I returned her hug, and then went back

to the drawing room determined to crush him.

April 25th.—I have not been able to settle down to work for several days. My mind has been in such a whirl, and even to-day, when I am feeling calmer, my utterances will be rather vague.

For the last fortnight a great deal has been going on, and I have been the object of much comment. Of course, Mr. Braithwaite's attentions have been the cause of this. At first only a few of my special set whispered, but in a short time many others began to interest themselves in our proceedings. I don't know what the reason may be, but no sooner is a flirtation between a girl and an eligible man discovered, than all think they have the right to mix themselves up in it, and give it the greatest possible prominence. During the last few days I have been pressingly invited to houses where I seldom visit, with the sole object of being confronted with Mr. Braithwaite: and to tell the truth, I have always

gone. Why? I cannot say, except that it pleases me to appear entirely unconcerned about my own affairs when everyone else is taking such a lively interest in them. I like to open my eyes very wide and screw up my mouth when any of the numerous busybodies who fuss and gush over me, go too far: and then above all it pleases me when he is there to give myself airs, and order people about, and cut into conversations and over-ride everyone's opinion as though I were an entirely privileged person: and it is wonderful what people will endure from me now. They give way abjectly, and take my insolence as a matter of course. To my friends I am the same as before: it is only the others I treat in this way. My view is, that they want to get as much amusement as they can out of me, and so they must pay for it. However, I don't think they have anything to complain of, for it must be uncommonly funny to see that great clumsy man trotting after me like a lamb.

The other evening in the Corelli's yellow ball-room, I was dancing the cotillon with Kotrof. I had on my yellow and silver gown, which looks so well there. In the doorway opposite me, I saw Mr. Braithwaite glaring at us over the heads of a group of men.

I paid no attention to him, but pretended to be entirely taken up with my partner's inane conversation, until seeing that he was quite furious, I beckoned him over, and when he came, begged him to fetch me a glass of water, a full one, full to the brim.

Well, you should have seen him come across the slippery floor with that glass of water in his hand!

Yet, seriously, there *is* something about him that interests me enormously. We have had many conversations together, and his experiences and opinions are so strange that they leave me in a state of bewilderment. Sometimes I think him a sort of grown-up boy, and sometimes a man of great practical capacity.

He is naïf, intolerant, fanciful and unconventional. Yes! that is the word, unventional.

He certainly would not pass muster in some circles I know of, and that is rather in his favour. There are no greater bores than conventional people. Then he is so kind. He has given Maria Galvagna a thousand francs for her home. As for me, though that can hardly be called disinterested kindness, he literally bombards me with bouquets, the only presents he dares offer me.

Of course his devotion is a sore subject with some people. I am scarcely on speaking terms with Eva now. She has turned her back upon me twice, and I have looked over her head. This leaves us quits as to manners.

But all this would not be enough to confuse me were I not so eager to know what everyone is saying about me. Do they think I am running after him? Do they imagine I care for him? Do they

imagine I want his money? Do they think I shall accept him if he proposes?

These are the questions to which I should like an answer.

I would give all I possess to be behind the scenes when they are talking. Judging from what they let fall, they are all very interested. How much, I wonder, is sincere interest, and how much mere curiosity? It is true I do not give them much opportunity to confide their opinions to me. Marjorie is the only friend I have, to whom I could really unbosom myself; but I have little faith in her judgment. She is so poetical, so unworldly, and so given to topsy-turvy arguments. In spite of this I shall try her. She will tell me what is the general impression, for that is what I long to know. I shall ask her to come and spend a day or two with me.

April 27th.—I knew she would come, dear little thing. One can always rely on her. After dinner we played Bézique, and then at eleven, when cousin Bertha retired,

we went upstairs and put on our dressing-gowns. I felt as though I could never go to bed.

Outside it was beautifully warm and still, and all the garden flowers seemed to be sending their perfume up to us as we sat on the balcony and watched the lights of Florence in the distance, and the moon-light flickering on the carriage drive.

Our gardens are doubly beautiful at night, when the nightingales are answering each other all along the hill-side, and the little owls are flitting in and out of the cypress trees. I love it then best of all. There is a witchery about it which I cannot attempt to describe, for I am no poet, and *it* is a poem.

For some time neither of us spoke. She seemed to be waiting, and I felt awkward and timid.

At last she said—

"Your letter told me you had something to ask me, darling: what is it?"

"I ought not to trouble you with my

stupid affairs," I replied, "but you know what people are saying, and you told me I might confide in you. I have spoken to no one else."

"It is very sweet of you," she said, putting her arm round my waist, "but you must not let yourself be influenced by me. I think so differently—so very differently to other people, especially about marriage. I cannot look upon it as an everlasting contract. No contract can be that. The evolutions of the mind forbid such a tie. To-day we may think in one way, but who can say what we may think when a year has flown?"

"But, Marjorie," I said, stopping her, "I am not engaged to Mr. Braithwaite."

"How I jump at conclusions," she cried with a silvery laugh. I dreamt you were last night, and so I believed it. My dreams seldom deceive me."

"I am as free as you are; only I want you to tell me what everyone thinks about it. It would be so good of you if you

would speak openly to me—just as though I were your oldest friend."

"Love asks a thousand questions," she replied, teazing me. "Did you hear what happened last night at 'Cooper's' party? She had engaged Mr. Braithwaite a week ago, and she asked a few people to meet him. It was much the same set as on the last occasion when you were there. Well, some of us stayed on, and about one o'clock, as we were smoking our last cigarettes and finishing our cocktails, some one, apropos of Queen Margherita's ropes of pearls, started a conversation upon precious stones. When we had all chattered away about our preferences, Mr. Braithwaite told us an extraordinary adventure which had befallen him years ago, when he was in a trading vessel off the coast of Ceylon. Just before anchor was weighed from some port or other, an old Jew came on board and entered his cabin. He appeared to be trembling with fear, and only after great hesitation, displayed a quantity of common

country jewellery, but, when Mr. Braithwaite refused to look at it, he produced from a little hair bag hidden in his beard—a magnificent black pearl.

"'I was struck by its great beauty,' Mr. Braithwaite continued. 'It was by far the finest pearl I had ever seen, although I was acquainted with most of the Crown jewels of Europe, and Mrs. M——'s fine collection in New York; so I bought it right away. When I arrived at Beyrout, which was our destination, I noticed two low caste Indians waiting at the landing place. On the following day I saw them again hanging about the Hotel, and again the day after. From Beyrout I went to Joppa, and the same men were on the boat. After that they followed me to Jerusalem. It then struck me that they must be after my pearl. It was not pleasant to feel myself shadowed. I would have had them arrested on suspicion, but I knew it would have done no good, so I set cunning to match cunning.'

"'How did you manage it?' asked Signor Galvagna.

"'I telegraphed to a friend in Paris, and he sent me by post a false pearl of almost exactly the same size and colour. I then changed my room, and took one with a balcony which was accessible from the garden. Two days after the false pearl disappeared from my travelling case, and I never set eyes on it or the natives again. It is probably now in the Indian temple from which the original one had been stolen.'

"'And the real one?' asked Eva.

"'I have it still. I always carry it about with me. Would you like to see how big it is?'

"'Oh yes,' we all shouted.

"'Then you shall,' he said, and with that he took out his penknife, and in a moment had ripped open the sleeve of his dress coat and shirt above his left elbow.

"'Here,' he said as we all crowded round, 'Mr. Galvagna, just turn back

the cloth. Here it is, you see!' and he pinched up the skin and showed a lump as big as a walnut in the fleshy part of the arm.

"'Feel it! Don't be afraid,' he cried to 'Cooper' as she bent over him.

"The rest of us sprang back, but she, whose nerves are of steel, stretched out her index finger and slowly poked it.

"As for me, I felt quite faint. The red silk lining of the sleeve turned back made it look like a great open wound. It was horrible, but oh! so interesting!

"'In the East it is the only way of carrying a sacred gem,' he said. 'There are so few of them left that they are all accurately known, and the priests would do anything to recover a missing one. Those men would have followed me to England if I had not played them the trick.'"

I said nothing as Marjorie rambled on, but I felt furious with Eva Clough. Perhaps she guessed it, for she continued apologetically:

"We stayed on some time after that, for our literary curiosity was excited to the highest pitch. 'Cooper' was quite beside herself. Her cross examination was most searching, though I don't think Mr. Braithwaite quite liked it. Once or twice she pushed her questions to the verge of impropriety, but you know her way and how a human document interests her. She hammered and hammered, and as we sat round listening, she jealously prevented our putting in a word. I suppose she thought that as it was told in *her* house she had a prior claim to the story. All the same I intend to write a sonnet about it.

"Yes, darling, he is a very strange and interesting personality, and if you have no other feeling towards him than merely a romancer's you must admit that he is a treasure. The very idea of his wealth, with all the power for good or evil that it bears with it, makes me tremble all over and stimulates my imagination to a fever. When I see a smile on his face, I fancy he

might build a cathedral; but when he frowns, I see in him a latter-day Caligula."

She ceased talking, and I, who had been listening to her with my face buried in my hands, could not repress a smile.

The thought that soon, if I wished it, I could be a sharer in all these powers filled me with pride. For days these possibilities had been dangled before me, until they had become a matter of course which I might regard as in a manner my due. I knew that it would cost me no effort and very little real enjoyment, to accept all and then to glide gracefully through life at the head of one or two sumptuous establishments. But Marjorie's way of looking at things answered to my own and justified it. There was only this difference between us, that she was more impressed than I by the power of his wealth, as was natural to such a sensitive imagination. What I really wanted to know, since we were coming to such close quarters on the subject, was, how far she would be prepared to go if she

were in my place. I was sure that both she and Eva were but poor readers of character when any personal feeling or rivalry was involved, but I believed that the literary instinct of both might be trusted. Merely from a romancer's point of view, as she had just said, there could be no doubt of his great value. That was enough for me! I had perceived it myself, and their opinion confirmed my own.

Yet would they or anyone else dare what I would dare, and make the sacrifice I would make? Would either of them dare —to put things to the test—to marry Mr. Braithwaite without considering his wealth, solely as a model for a searching study such as might, nay would, place me in the front rank of contemporary novelists!

Of course Eva would bite her pen and draw distinctions—wriggling out of it by saying that the two things hung together and could not be separated—that his riches helped to make him the interesting figure he was, and so forth. There was much in

that, and to tell the truth, if he had been a poor man the idea of marrying him would certainly never have entered my head. Yet in spite of the two things being allied, if I in my heart of hearts accepted him *solely* for the one reason, then I should be devoting myself, deny it who might, to my calling.

But why thus argue with myself!

To wrest him out of Eva's hands, and prevent her infamous exploitation of him — that were in itself reason enough.

My hand trembled as I laid it on Marjorie's shoulder, and my voice sank to a whisper as I turned to her, and said:

"Do you entirely and absolutely put your genius above all, and would you be willing to sacrifice everything to gain an ideal vantage ground for it? You understand me, dear?"

"How can you ask!" she replied softly. "If I were a violinist I would sell my last chemise to possess a Stradivarius, but then

my music would melt the very rocks to tears."

"Oh, Marjorie!" I cried in an agony of doubt, "are you sure, quite sure? Is it not all a phantom?"

She made no response. With her deep, passionate eyes turned up to the sky, and her wan face blanched in the moonlight, she seemed less an earthly companion than some frail wanderer from another world, and a chill crept over me, as the jewel in her hair lit its tiny glow and the night wind slowly waved a shadow across us.

"Look! look!" at last she said, with a start, "something white crossed the drive. There again—down by that group of cypresses!"

I followed her gesture, but saw nothing. A numbness seemed to hold me as if my words had conjured up some terrible mystery.

"I am sure I am not mistaken!" she said earnestly. "Olympia, I must go in."

"Don't be nervous, darling," I cried,

trying to be calm, "It is your fancy; you are excited—nothing more. What could it be?"

"Perhaps there was nothing," she said after a moment, shivering, "but if you were not there I should rush into bed and cover my head with the pillows."

"My sweet Marjorie," I said, drawing her to me to reassure her, "you must bear with me. You feel all I want to tell you, and you know the hazards."

"Yes," she said vaguely, her eyes fixed on the long windings of the drive and the clump of cypresses.

"Do you believe with some people that in the affairs of life, the end sanctifies the means? Would that be a sufficient excuse for me?"

She murmured something I could not catch.

"Such reasoning never commended itself to me. If I were thoroughly persuaded—if I had only some of your spirit—how happy I should be! I can never be original

in my views on things about which people around me have such fixed opinions. That is why I asked *you* to come to me as a true friend in my hour of perplexity, and why your advice would be of such great value to me."

I stopped, for she had torn herself from me with a cry. "There it is again—the white thing—the dreadful white thing coming towards the house"—and had fled into the room.

This time it was as she had said. There was a white thing coming, and my heart for a moment stood still, but I steadied myself against the contagion of her panic and watched. Seen in the tremulous shadow of the olives it looked ghostly enough, but as it emerged I saw at once that it was only my dear old Maremma dog from the lodge. Slowly and majestically with his big white tail erect he walked out into the moonlight, a deep shadow following him step by step, and halted on the grass plot before the house. Then raising his head he bayed

one long dismal note towards my windows.

"It is only Wolf," I cried through the open door to Marjorie. "Wolf! Wolf! don't you see me up here!"

But the dog, without regarding my calls, bayed one more dismal note and then, dropping his tail, marched slowly back down the drive like one who has performed a sad, solemn duty.

It was striking one o'clock as I closed the window.

"Marjorie," I said, "we have talked too long, you should have been in bed ages ago!"

"Good night," she said kissing me. "I shall not sleep before I have had a good cry. Good night!"

April 30th.—Three days have passed since I last wrote, and I still am free. He has said nothing yet, but this state of things cannot last much longer. Every morning there comes a monster bouquet with his card and some polite message. It has become such a matter of course that I sometimes forget to thank him when I meet him. He, too, when I mention it, seems surprised, as though he were scarcely aware he had sent them. Perhaps he has simply given his order to some florist and told his servant not to forget. I should like to know whether he chooses the flowers himself or leaves it all to them. The orchids this morning were lovely.

On Monday at the Clarke's he made me promise to drive with him on his drag.

He fixed on Saturday if the weather remains as fine as it is now. This morning Mrs. Inglis received a note from him asking us to a picnic at Pratolino. We are to start on Saturday morning punctually at eleven.

I shall wear my new dark blue Paris foulard and the hat that goes with it.

May 1st.—May-day. What fun we had four years ago at High Daw when we masqueraded through the village dressed up as shepherdesses with crooks garlanded with cherry blossom. I think I looked pretty on that occasion. I do hope Cuthbert will have a merry wife. From her photo she looks charming, and I am sure he would be very particular. He would never marry any girl who was not quite up to his standard. It is easy for me to guess that he would be against my accepting Mr. Braithwaite. He would not like the idea of one of "us" marrying a man of no family. I don't think either that he and Mr. Braithwaite would get on together. This is by far the most trying part of the

situation. I could never quarrel with Cuthbert. I am much too fond of him, and yet, can I sacrifice my future to his scruples? He will look at it from his own point of view and will condemn me as a bad "kinswoman." Of course he is quite right. He represents our family, and without a family to fall back upon, what has one in the world! If I were in his place I would never tolerate a *mésalliance*, still, when I look at our pedigree, which dear mother had made out on parchment in the Italian way, I am disappointed—there is such a lack of ambition about it! It is just like a newspaper made up of nothing but columns of births, marriages, and deaths. If only some of them had *done* something! But no—heredity can never be my excuse. If I come to need one, let it be said that I married for money—a good enough explanation. I only wish Cuthbert's mind were more elastic, that I might make it clear to him at least.

May 3rd. I enjoyed that picnic yester-

day very much. After I had refused the box seat I got up between Marchesa Govio and a nice-looking man named Ridley. In a few minutes I found out that he came from Yorkshire, and knew some cousins of ours, so we had plenty to talk about. He told me that he was on his way to join an exploring expedition up the Euphrates valley. Behind us sat Mr. Humphreys, Alba Falquière, and that funny old Prince Montecaretto.

At the villa we found the Lawsons, Kotroffs, and some new people just arrived in Florence, who had driven out on their own account.

We sat down to luncheon, a party of seventeen.

Of course the food was excellent. All sorts of rare things served in lovely china, and a bottle of champagne beside each of us.

That must have been one of *his* ideas. He told me the other day he always liked to help himself to wine.

When luncheon was over there was a sudden lull down the table which left us at our end chattering like jays, and when I looked up, to my horror I saw Mr. Braithwaite waving his glass at me. Fancy the absurdity of it! I pretended not to see, Charlotte Lawson said, " He is drinking your health."

I got rather red, and nodded slightly, and they all began to laugh. After coffee on the terrace we scattered about, and later on Mr. Ridley photographed us. The place he chose was a flight of steps leading up to a niche where a statue had once stood. Here we arranged ourselves to the best advantage.

" There is one thing I would suggest," said Mr. Ridley. That niche must be filled : who will do it ? "

" Mr. Braithwaite ! " we all cried.

" It must be a lady," they objected.

" Miss Colville Daw, will you oblige us all, and me in particular," *he* whispered.

"Yes!" I said, springing up at once, "I will take the chair."

But to my annoyance he followed me and placed himself against the pedestal.

"Mr. Braithwaite," I said sharply, "you are destroying the arrangements."

"I would destroy anything to be near you," he muttered.

"Attention!" called out Mr. Ridley, and we were taken.

When we were back in Florence I went to see Mme. de Rabanine and found her at home. Presently she drew me aside into the second drawing-room and kissed me.

"How pretty you are looking, my dear, and that costume of yours," she added, "is charming." Holding both my hands in hers, and looking me up and down. "But tell me what is it that everyone is saying about you. I must not be the last person in the world to be told. Old women like me don't like to be left in the dark."

"Dearest Mme. Rabanine," I said, kissing her on both cheeks, "I have a favour to

ask of you, and you are always so sweet that I am sure you won't refuse. May I have half an hour with you when you are quite alone?"

"At any time, Olympia, before four—after that I am at home to everyone. Come to-morrow at three and we will take counsel together." Saying this, she squeezed my hand and went into the other room. When I left she whispered "At three, and a full confession."

May 4th.—A letter from Madame de Rabanine, saying that her husband had a bad attack in the night, and that she is wearied out. Will I choose a day at the end of the week?

This is a disappointment. She was such an intimate friend of mother's, that I could tell her everything, and be sure that her advice would be good. Then her discernment and knowledge are so great, and her sympathies so wide. I will write and say Saturday. How dreadful it must be to be married to a man who has softening of the brain!

May 5th.—A delightful note from the Editor of the Anglo-American, enclosing a cheque for ten pounds. He is pleased with my sketch, and will put it into the next number. He adds that my work possesses qualities of breadth and vigour rarely found in lady authors. Dear man!

May 6th.—*He* came yesterday, but I was out.

Cousin Bertha spoke to me last evening after dinner. She has had it on her mind, I know, for some days.

"If you love Mr. Braithwaite," she said, "I am sure your dear Mother would have had no objection." I winced when she said this so quietly. I would have told Mother everything and let her decide.

Midnight.—He came this afternoon and I said "Yes."

May 8th.—George comes every day and stays as long as I will allow him. He has given me a beautiful bracelet.

May 9th.—Madame de Rabanine received me to-day, although she was very

poorly, and let me stay chatting with her for over an hour. I told her, of course, how sorry I was not to have been able to consult her before I decided for myself. She said in her amiable, worldly way:

"I don't know your fiancé yet, but from all I hear he is the sort of man who needs a young and beautiful wife to guide him. He will certainly spoil you, and that is what we women like best, is it not? When I was engaged to Sergius—yes, he is better, thank you—very much better—I was often obliged to put a stop to the fantastic projects he planned for my amusement. We were both very young, and you can have no idea how handsome he looked when he came to our Embassy in his uniform of the Imperial Guard. There is his portrait," she added with tears in her eyes. "Now, dear, you must let me be the first of your friends to make you a wedding gift. I wore this pendant on my wedding-day, forty years ago, and you must promise me to wear it on yours."

But the first person of all to congratulate me was Mattei. The morning after he proposed, she called at half-past ten. Heaven knows how she had heard of it—dressmakers are really wonderful! She had wept all night for joy, she said, when she heard that one of her Signorine was going to marry "il richissimo Braithwaite," and she implored me to be true to Florence. I answered her that the wedding would take place here where I have so many friends, and that she should have part of the "trousseau," so she went away happy.

May 10th.—I rode to-day in the Cascine with George and Mr. Humphreys. George has a good seat, but rough hands. I saw that Mr. Humphreys did not approve of his riding. It is un-English.

May 15th.—I have so much to do now, and so many visitors, that I don't know which way to turn. The wedding is fixed for the beginning of June, but we shall decide the day when George has been to

London. He expects to be absent about ten days.

May 17th.—Lots of presents, and many more coming. My wedding is the only thing talked of.

May 20th.—He went away on the eighteenth, and I have been free to do as I liked. I have never felt so frisky!

May 26th.—A packet from Marjorie and a note in which she says:—

"My dearest friend,

"Some Italian peasants have a delightful custom. After the vintage, they put aside a few bottles of their best wine. Of these, some find their way into the cellar of the village priest, while the rest are produced on family occasions, such as weddings. Following their example, I send you a specimen of my own "petit crû" and add to it a thousand warmest wishes.

"Your own

"MARJORIE."

On opening it I found a sheet of parch-

ment bordered by a design of cinque cento roses embroidered in silk, and in the middle, in her tiny, precious handwriting, the following verses:

THE ROSES.

"He bound two flowers in her sunburnt hair,
A red, red rose the one: the other white,
White as a snow-flake: then he said Good-night,
And kissed her in the twilight standing there,

"Just where the birch tree throws a silver line
Across the tangle of the straggling wood,
And when she left him, motionless he stood
Watching the slender crescent moon decline.

"Then when she reached her room, she pinned each flower
To the soft curtain round about her bed,
One on each side—the white rose and the red—
To breathe their perfume through her little bower.

"And ere she slept she reached the white, white rose,
Pressed it to her and kissed it thrice: for him,
For her, for love—for all the thoughts that brim
To silent ecstasy the heart's repose.

"And ere she slept her lips did but repeat:
'He loves me—yes! by this white rose *I* love.
Oh may some dreams swift-winged from above
Bear me to him and lay me at his feet.'

"But when she woke, the dawn had just begun
Its tender march across her chamber floor,
And ever as she gazed at it, the more
It grew and gilt her treasures one by one.

"And climbing up at last, the glory stood
All round her bed. She was beatified,
Entranced and speechless, till the sunbeams dyed
The red rose crimson like a splash of blood.

"Then with a cry, she snatched the blood-red rose
She had not dared caress the night before;
(Great God! the joy) not thrice, but thrice a score
Of times she kissed its stalk and bloom and core,
Until her fancy, joyful to disclose

"A hundred mysteries—the play and strife
Of vagrant longings—shot up like a cloud
Of whirling, zagging, gorgeous butterflies
On their mad gambols through the summer skies,
And all her being woke and cried aloud
Oh, bliss to love! oh, bliss to live my life!"

My answer was:

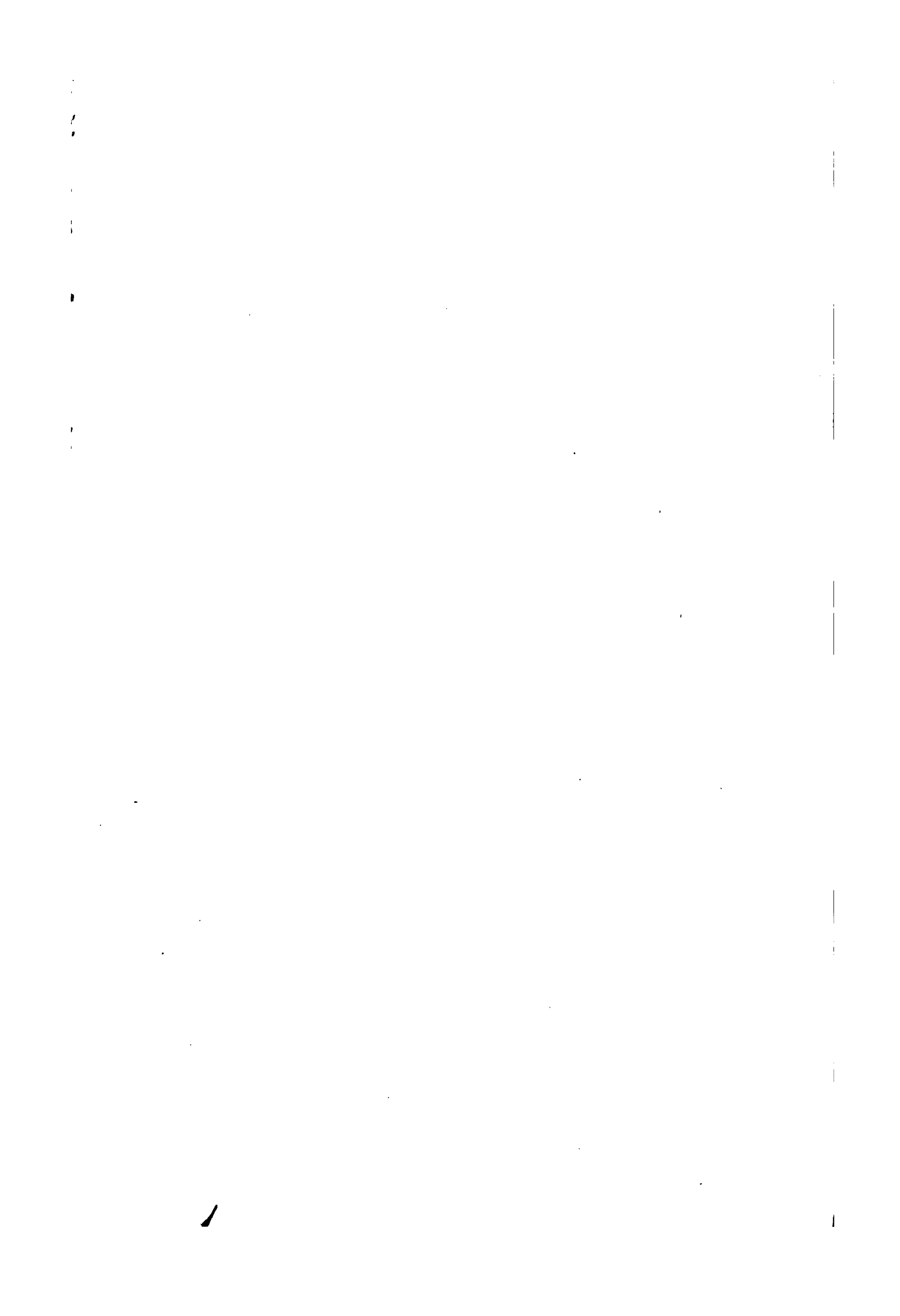
"My own Marjorie,

"Your sweet, wistful lines have flown straight to my heart. I have read them again and again, and each time their music has brought you back to me. I know not how to thank you for them, nor what wish

to send you in return save this—that ere long some one who is worthy of your genius and of you may weave such roses about your brow.

"Your very loving
"OLYMPIA."

May 30th.—George returned from England last night. The wedding is fixed for the eighth. I shall take up my journal again when all this bustle is over.



OLYMPIA'S JOURNAL.

PART II.

VENICE, *November 9th.*—I am now feeling settled for the first time since the wedding in May. Our summer, passed in England, was so taken up with visits and arrangements for spending next season in London that I was unable to get through any serious work of composition. My note-books, however, show a good result. When in the days before my marriage I formed the project of writing a realistic novel and took counsel with my friends about it, I bought a quantity of large-sized paper and had it bound up. On the backs of these books, for the sake of system, I put labels stating what their contents were to be—Character Studies—Landscapes—General Notes, etc., etc.,—and later on, when I became convinced that Mr. Braithwaite

was just the type which I needed for my work, I added to their number one more—"Cyril Gordon"—the Cyril Gordon note-book being devoted to the personal peculiarities of George.

Since then I have written so much that the book is nearly full of stories about him; scraps of conversation and observations taken on the spot of his habits, manners and thoughts. They are strange reading! I should not like anyone to peep into "Cyril Gordon."

The question now arises—How is all this material to be employed? I see it will be a difficult task, almost beyond my power at present to give a definite solution of him because, when I consult my notes, I find them so perverse and contradictory.

Yet I remember that Eva once laid stress upon this, and that I agreed with her when she said that it was the mission of modern novelists to combine in one single study "the inconsistences and marvellous surprises of human nature." Is it not one

of the cheering tendencies of the day—this deep searching of causes below the surface to explain how these contradictions come about, making of the psychological novelist a sort of pilot, proud of navigating his bark among the cross currents and shoals of a difficult coast? Are not these difficulties unavoidable in the search after real truth?

When I begin my novel I must bear this in mind. George must stand in it like some ancient chapter-house supported by buttresses that oppose one another. His contradictions will be those buttresses. In the delicate working out of his character I will be as impartial as possible, viewing him from the outside and letting his actions tell their own tale, but at the same time leading the reader who must condemn much to pardon much also. In one respect I am certainly lucky. There is no probability of my becoming a partisan and fighting his battles, as lady novelists so often do for their heroes. He will not be my hero—

that would be a misleading title. He will be my subject.

Then, too, doubts sometimes assail me as to whether he is really such a "rara avis" as we all imagined when we sat and discussed him in our little Florentine coterie. There may be tens or hundreds of men like him wandering about the world. Still, whether that be so or not, all depends upon the way I see him and my ability to render him interesting. Certain salient points in his everyday behaviour are clear enough, but what he might become under the pressure of pain, grief, fear, jealousy, etc., etc., I have had no opportunity of observing. The future may have many surprises in store. All I can do, therefore, at present, is to turn things over in my mind and be sure of what I know. There are still two points which worry me. The first of these is the change which has gradually come over him since our marriage. He is no longer the same self-assertive, boastful man. Compared to what he was he is now

domesticated and commonplace. I used to attribute this to the frequency of his headaches, but now it occurs to me that it may be owing to the influence which I exert over him. But how is this to be avoided? Evidently we cannot both of us be in command.

It is really annoying that this difficulty should have arisen, and I almost wish that I could again sacrifice myself by sinking my own personality. The ideal observer in my position should be a plain, mean-spirited, acquiescent little woman who would follow him about like his shadow and mark his doings as she flattered his vanity and urged him on to courses of extravagance and folly. Such a wretched creature I can never become, and so my work must suffer. Nevertheless, to find a way out of this difficulty I might well adapt the story to the actual state of things, and make the relations between two people so diverse, as he and I, the theme. But then I should certainly be inclined—be compelled—to

favour myself. A novel of which the interest was centred on a series of encounters between the writer and her husband might amuse some readers, but on the whole would be a mistake. No! my first idea is the best. He shall stand as the principal figure, alone. For the moment he may be under eclipse, but he will return to his former self by-and-by, without doubt, and whenever he does my note-book will be enriched by some suggestive pages.

The second and most important point is one that concerns myself and my powers of observation. I feel that I have lost the firm grip of the subject I had when I began to make notes on Cyril Gordon. I no longer see him as I saw him then when he used to walk among us literary ladies like a bull in a china shop and set all our nerves going. Our life together has toned things down, and my close microscopic manner has cramped me and may prevent me from treating him as broadly as I ought.

Painters, when they work, occasionally step back from their canvas and I, if it were possible, would do the same.

As to the secondary characters, they will come of themselves quite naturally. My memory is crowded with suitable ones, and I have only to take my choice. If I had not determined to restrict their number, I could put them in by scores in great groups and scenes. What ludicrous combinations arise in my mind! It makes me laugh to think what I might make them say and do. But I will be moderate. Nothing shall interfere with the monumental completeness of George's figure. He shall dominate head and shoulders above the rest. Only I will reserve a part for Marjorie, with a good deal of love and tender feeling in it.

Now that my life is more regular I shall find that my difficulties vanish. I can work undisturbed because George never even inquires what it is that takes up so much of my time. That in itself is a little dis-

quieting. Of course I feel that what I am doing is not justifiable from an ordinary point of view. There are people who might even strongly disapprove of it as a violation of domestic confidence, and call it treachery. George, too, who likes to hear himself talked of, might object to be written about.

The other day when he came into my sitting-room and found me writing (I had forgotten to turn the key as I generally do), a very peculiar smile passed over his face. I hastily put a piece of blotting paper over the page, but other MSS. were scattered over the table and I could not hide them. It would have been only natural to ask what I was doing, but instead of that he briefly said, "Send a note to the Princess to say I won't go," and left the room. I would give worlds to know what he thought.

Afterwards I felt rather uncomfortable. It flashed across me that in my eagerness to study him I might have betrayed my hand and that he, without saying anything, was fully alive to my proceedings.

But whatever happens, I will not allow him to interfere. My novel shall never be at the mercy of his caprice.

In a general way we get on well enough. I never pretend that I am in love with him, yet my novel which caused me to marry him draws me nearer to him every day, and substitutes sympathy, which after all is as fine a sentiment, for affection. I sympathize with him, and that is enough.

Nov. 10th.—George's temper has been a good deal ruffled lately, and I have found him difficult to manage. About three years ago he bought this palace and lived in it for some months during the summer. As a bachelor it did not much matter to him how the household was conducted. He had his valet, and one or two servants to look after the four rooms on the first floor which he occupied. The rest of the house remained shut up. Now such an arrangement is impossible. In England we engaged some servants—a butler, a page-boy, and two housemaids, and before we started on the

yacht we packed them all off together to get things in order before we arrived. I was opposed to this arrangement, thinking that it would be wiser for us to arrive in Venice before they did. Events have proved that I was right, for this morning my maid told me, while she was doing my hair, that the servants were all at sixes and sevens. Later on, when George was out, the butler came to me with a long face to say that he could no longer put up with the airs of Mr. Marshall, George's man, and that at the end of the month he wished to break his engagement. That did not surprise me at all. I don't think any respectable man would stop in the house with Marshall. I pacified the butler and spoke to George about it: but that is a point on which we always differ. He is attached to that worthless Marshall, and will not hear of dismissing him. I told him that the other servants would leave in a body if Marshall remained, but he only answered, "Let them go!"

George has engaged two more gondoliers, and we now have four of these picturesque creatures posturing all day long on our door-step. Without them we could not get on at all, they are so handy and obliging. They come at eight in the morning and remain until any hour of the night. We have given them a room on the ground floor to sit in when off duty, but they rarely make use of it, preferring to sit on the steps or lie in the gondolas muffled up in cloaks.

Salvatore is our first gondolier. He earns five francs a day and his food, besides numerous gratuities. He is a handsome young man with dark eyes, a straight nose, and a moustache which he waxes every morning. When he is dressed in our dark blue livery and scarlet sash he looks as beautiful as a guardsman; and he is perfectly well aware of the fact. At first he actually dared to make eyes at me. However, I soon stopped his presumption. Now that he knows what sort of a mistress he has, his

manners are quite perfect; a mixture of urbanity and chivalrous deference that might touch a harder heart than mine. When I call him to order (as I have done once or twice rather sharply before the others, to show that I mean to be obeyed) he receives my scolding with the air of a man who is being told his faults by the woman he loves best in the world. The others are like him, but not so good looking. They follow his directions and copy him as well as they can. Among themselves they have a code which settles all questions: without it I expect they would quarrel continually. In our household they may prove troublesome unless they are well looked after. The English menservants dislike them and pretend to despise them, but the women folk, I see, are on their side.

The housemaids (I hear this through Emma) are delighted with Venice. "There is so much less dusting," is the reason they give. I sent them to the theatre last evening with Mrs. Kemp, and I believe that

Salvatore and Giovanni gallantly rowed them there and back.

I notice that on Sundays Emma, the youngest and prettiest of the two, wears a Venetian brooch of glass mosaic.

Nov. 14th.—The household now works smoothly enough. I have made this arrangement with George: that I shall undertake the internal administration, while he controls the gondoliers and the garden, which is on the island of Giudecca. The only difficulty is that he speaks very little Italian, and so the men pretend to misunderstand his orders. He has a dispute going on with the authorities about the new posts he wants to put up on front of the palace. He cannot bear opposition, and calls the officials all sorts of names in English, but as they don't understand him, no harm is done. I have written a note to the Secretary to explain what we want. We shall paint the posts red, with a design round the cap.

Nov. 16th.—Last evening I went up to

an "At Home" at the Scandiglia's. He is admiral in command here. Two very pretty Austrian ladies, Countess Trachwitz and her sister-in-law, were there. Mr. Burns, an artist, told me, that an Englishman who had just returned from the Euphrates Valley is staying at Hotel Danieli. He did not remember his name. Can it be Mr. Ridley? I must send and inquire.

Marjorie writes that it is bitterly cold in Florence. The *tramontana* makes her shiver all day long. She would like to creep into a little box lined with flannel and sleep until the Spring comes again. She misses me very much. She will soon send me her new book of Rhymes.

Nov. 19th. Mr. Ridley is coming to see me this afternoon. He has been three weeks at Danieli's getting over an attack of fever. He wears one arm in a sling. Poor fellow! what hardships he must have undergone in those wild regions.

Nov. 20th.—Mr. Ridley called yesterday. He was looking very pale and worn. He

has been in bed ever since he reached Venice. The doctor tells him he must not be out after sunset. We chatted for more than an hour, and he told me about his adventures among the mountain tribes of Persia. His arm was broken in an affray. That, together with low fever, pulled him down and compelled him to leave for England. On the way he stopped here, and finding the climate suited him, stayed on. I reminded him of our picnic in Florence, and we laughed a good deal over the photograph.

"Some of my friends chaff me about my mania for photography," he said. "Now I shall be able to say that it is really of some use."

"Because you took me in a niche?"

"With *him* at your feet. It was a declaration before the world, which my camera helped to bring about."

"How cynical your travels have made you!"

"I am sorry you think so," he answered

lightly. "When I heard of your marriage it was too late to congratulate you, and I was far from posts and telegraphs. I regretted that I had not been able to stop in Florence for the wedding."

"You are cynical again. The air of the desert has made a Diogenes of you. Do you think marriage has changed me much?"

"It has made you very severe on a poor bachelor like myself."

After a pause, he continued, "When I came to Venice I never dreamt of meeting you."

"Nor I you."

"I thought I would keep away from everyone and amuse myself with my camera, but now——"

"What?"

"I shall find it difficult."

"You think I shall interrupt you?"

"I think it very likely."

"You had better have another cup of tea to console you. There! I do not

want to bore my friends with too much of my society, but please not to forget that every day at this hour I am at home, and I expect those who care for me to come very often if they want me to care for them."

He bowed.

"And then," I added, "I shall not always be alone. There are some charming young ladies here who will interest you, I am sure. By the bye, I mean to get up some little dances, and then I shall rely on you. Don't look so reproachful! We shall not allow you to be a bear. To-night I am writing to Yorkshire, and I shall tell them all about you."

Nov. 24th.—I have been busy arranging the south-east room upstairs as my workshop. It has a dear old-fashioned corner window, and the walls are stuccoed. I have hunted up some pretty painted furniture from the antiquarians, and installed my writing desk in the corner, whence I can command a view of the Grand Canal

and part of the lagoon beyond. The great expanse helps me in my writing, I think, and gives a charm to my compositions. But I don't often indulge my imagination in this way. It is too exciting. When I am studying "Cyril Gordon," I fix my eyes on the houses opposite and jot down my notes as though I were writing a washing-bill.

His attitude here as a responsible person and host, is the heading of one of my sections. I shall have plenty to say on that subject when we begin to entertain. He wishes to give one dinner party a week as soon as the "Chef" arrives from Genoa.

It will be trying for me. He will have to take in the greatest lady of the party and entertain her on his right, and the second greatest lady on his left, during the repast, which, with his notions of good cheer, will certainly last two hours. During that time those two sagacious dames will have plenty of leisure to discover all his

weaknesses, and, if they are not well disposed, to draw him into indiscretions. Towards the end of dinner George always becomes too loquacious. I shall warn him against it. His credit becomes a constant preoccupation to me now, and I feel sometimes as though I should like to put a straight waistcoat on him. It is foolish, perhaps, to be so sensitive. The world is very indulgent to such a man as George. Yet it really tortures me to hear him mispronounce a word, or make some dreadful remark—not so much before old people, they are more tolerant—but before girls and younger men. I know what I should have thought of him myself not very long ago.

Nov. 25th.—Mrs. Alston dined with us last evening, and then we went to the Goldoni Theatre to hear Signora Duse in Gallina's play, "Tristi Amori." It is a dreadfully sad story, and her rendering was almost too painful. She threw into the part all that slow-growing, hopeless misery of the soul, that seems to be the

portion of so many women. I don't know whether Mrs. Alston has had a sad chapter in her life, I think she must have, for she sobbed in the last act where the husband takes back the wife for the sake of the child. It was very touching! I shall not go and hear her again. All the morning, her voice, as she pronounced certain phrases, kept coming back to me, bringing with it a strange longing that I never felt before. It has made me low-spirited, and very peevish with George and the servants.

A woman in my position is a fool if she allows trifles to upset her. She has her duties to perform and an example to set. She is responsible, and responsibility involves discipline of the head, and especially of the heart, that raises her at once above self-indulgence. It is her fault if she allows external influences to affect her.

I won't write any more about this. I don't feel very cheerful to-day. There is something in the air of Venice that takes the pluck out of me.

Nov. 29th. I had such a pleasant little "At Home" on Tuesday evening, the first occasion on which I played the part of hostess. Altogether thirty people. It went off without the least hitch. George enjoyed himself in the whist room, where he stayed the greater part of the evening. Mr. Ridley was of the greatest assistance. I was surprised to hear him talking very good French. He tells me he is learning Italian as fast as he can. I have lent him "Vita dei Campi" by Verga, and he has promised me some photographs of Nineveh. I went to-day to order myself a sandolo. It is to have my monogram worked on the cushions. In the spring I shall begin to row. The Curzons row beautifully.

December 2nd.—Yesterday Mr. Ridley accompanied Mrs. Curzon and myself to the ducal palace. He is so clever and well-informed. Mrs. Curzon thinks him charming. He is enthusiastic about his explorations and says he must go back as soon as he is strong enough. I wish he

would not talk so much about it. He admires my dark green hat, so I always wear it to please him.

Dec. 4th.—I am trying to arrange a party on the lagoon, but it hangs fire. George does not want to go, and Salvatore has hurt his hand and cannot row. Mr. Ridley has sent me a photograph of himself in his travelling costume. He looks quite like an Arab. He wants one of me taken in Florence before I was married. I shall send him the large one done in the garden of the villa.

Dec. 6th.—George has gone over to Trieste for two days to fetch a steam launch. Now that he is away the household goes ever so much better. He does not understand servants in the least. At one moment he abuses them, and the next he is over indulgent to them. The gondoliers laugh at him behind his back. I believe I could manage them better by myself.

He wants me to sit for my bust, but I

don't care about it. If it were successful I know he would have his own done, to place in the drawing-room as a pendant to mine!

Dec. 8th.—George being still away, Salvatore took leave of absence yesterday. I sent for him this morning and gave him a good scolding before the other servants.

Dec. 9th.—George has returned with the launch. It will be very useful for the lagoons. It will amuse him, too, for he finds a gondola very slow.

The Lido was lovely this afternoon, the sea turquoise blue with just a few white fringed waves on the sandbanks, and breeze enough to swell out the golden sails of the fishing boats. I walked up and down with Alice Curzon for an hour, while Jacky hunted in the dried grass. Coming back, the sunset was magnificent.

Dec. 10th.—To-day nothing seems to me of much consequence. To sit and scribble at my desk is such poor-spirited work. I put down my pen and think, and think,

but nothing comes. I look out of the window, and every boat that passes seems of more consequence than the page in front of me.

This morning in the distance down the Grand Canal I saw a man trying to row a boat. He was going into all sorts of strange attitudes, and once he nearly fell in as a steamer passed. I watched him till he was out of sight. If my boat were ready I would go out also instead of quill driving.

Mr. Ridley talks to me now with a reserve that annoys me. I feel that he has a grudge against me which he tries to hide. I believe he is very satirical, at least he appears so when we are alone together. His manner then changes completely. He is no longer amusing or light-hearted. Perhaps he thinks me hard; other people do, and it may be that they are right. He misjudges me, no doubt, like everyone else. Men are so jealous of one another. He detests George, I am sure. I am sure, also, that he despises me.

If I give a dinner party next week I shall put that pretty Austrian girl next him to show him that I—well, that does not matter! I shall talk in a general way, and make a few indifferent remarks to him. He will understand what I mean. He is very much mistaken if he takes me for one of those foolish creatures who fall in love with the first man who pays them attentions. I only wish he had a sister or someone here to look after him a little. He is so imprudent about himself. If he fell seriously ill he would not have a soul to nurse him, and then, these expeditions in the Desert to grub up the foundations of cities that never existed and to photograph those horrible Arab women! What pleasure does he find in it all? He tells me he must get back there as quickly as possible. His friends write to say they are on the eve of great discoveries. They are digging for Nebuchadnezzar's dressing-room, or some such nonsense.

Dec. 11th.—I was up early this morning,

and out at seven. The piazza was so full of fog that nothing could be seen but the top of the Campanile. On the riva a few fishermen were about, and outside towards San Giorgio a steamer was blowing its fog horn every two minutes. I went on towards the public gardens, cutting my way through the mist, which clung to my fur jacket with little grey tongues, and thumping down the end of my walking stick like a blind beggar. It was delightful to be up and about when everyone else was in bed.

In the long avenue of plane trees I began to run. About half way down it I almost fell into the arms of a man who was walking hard in another direction. To my great astonishment it was Mr. Ridley.

" Who would have expected to meet you here ? " I said. " You ought to be in bed."

" I am indulging myself by disobeying the doctor. In the desert we are all up at daybreak, so it has become one of my habits, but I never dreamt that anyone

else in Venice was so early. How fast you run."

"You saw me?"

He laughed. "If my pace is not too slow I should like to join you."

"I shall be delighted," I answered, without looking at him.

At the low wall that borders the gardens we stopped and looked out over the lagoon. In the direction of the Lido an almost imperceptible brightness showed that the sun would come from that quarter to chase away the fog—but not yet—not for another hour or two. For the present all was grey and blurred. Only overhead clouds of vapour passed in a steady flow, and silently slid through the great hedges of plane trees behind us. As we stood there, first one clock and then another began to strike half-past seven—St. Mark's the deepest of them all.

"I must trouble you to hold my muff," I said, suddenly. "My gloves are wet and I must take them off." I handed it to

him, and he brushed it lightly across his face, as though he liked the touch of the fur.

"What a colour you have," he said over it.

I knew I had. My face was purple, and the fog had taken all the curl out of my hair. I felt a perfect fright, and yet he stood there looking at me as though he could not take his eyes away.

"You are very independent to be out here in the fog by yourself," he continued, in a voice of assumed reproach. "It might scandalize some of your Venetian friends if they knew that the Signora of the Palazzo Gritti had been racing up and down the public gardens at seven o'clock in the morning like—."

"Like a mad woman, you were going to say."

"Like a mad woman," he repeated after me. "They would think as I do, that a lady in her position—a lady of fashion and—"

"Oh! don't go on!" I cried.

"Why not?" he asked, raising his eyebrows. "Isn't it true?"

"You don't understand! You can't! And I cannot tell you why—"

"I was only making fun," he answered penitently.

"You don't know me," I continued. "If you did you would'nt be so hard on me. You would be inclined rather to pity me."

"Hard? I was only joking. I told you so."

"Yes! You think what everyone else thinks, but you are wrong, completely wrong!"

"If I have said anything to hurt you," he began again, "I beg you to forgive me."

"I understand you. I know what you mean, though you do not put it into words. Other people may think what they like, but I will not be misjudged by you. If I were to tell you how I come to be in the position which you have just thrown in my teeth, you would not believe me—it would

be impossible for you to believe me. It *now* seems almost impossible to me. Things change, don't they? And when one has made a mistake, it is not very pleasant to be reminded of it by anyone, least of all by the very person who ought to be silent."

I was carried away when I said this. A moment after I would rather have cut off my right hand. His face changed, and he became suddenly serious.

"A beautiful woman like you need never fear the judgment of her friends. All that *one* of them asks is to be allowed to admire her sincerely, and to feel that she is not displeased by it."

He said this so kindly and simply, that I came to myself at once, and held out my hand to him.

"Thank you," I said, "it is my turn to ask your pardon now. If I had not looked upon you almost as an old friend, I should never have said what I did. Let us walk on. I have just time for a turn, and then I must get back."

The rest of our stroll was very pleasant, for we both had regained our good temper. I told him of Cuthbert's engagement and all the home news I could think of, and made him promise to support me in my first dinner party next week.

When we parted he said, "You are not in the least angry with me now?"

"Not in the least. Good-bye!"

Dec. 13th.—I was annoyed this afternoon when I returned to the Palace to see the cook sitting at the water entrance on one of the kitchen chairs reading the "Secolo," to the gondoliers. When he saw me approaching he decamped, but I let him know that I had seen him and was displeased. He is an energetic little man, and evidently he has not enough to do. I shall invite a few people for the 21st. The grouse Cuthbert sent me will be a novelty here.

Dec. 14th.—Mr. Ridley has not called for ever so long. I wonder why? I have sent him an invitation to dine with us on

the 21st. We shall be ten, counting ourselves.

I go in with Admiral Scandiglia and George takes in Countess Trachwitz: on his left he has the Admiral's wife, who is taken in by Trachwitz. Mr. Ridley is on my right with Hélène, and the places opposite them are filled by Teresa and Morri.

I think that will do. George will be able to practise his French on the Countess, and both she and Mme. Scandiglia can talk English to him. I shall use the old Chelsea service, and telegraph to Florence for flowers.

Dec. 15th.—I went this afternoon with Alice Curzon to visit Mr. Burns' studio. We found him painting a picture called "The Fortune Teller." The model was sitting when we arrived—a fine handsome creature, called Catina. I like his painting very much. The picture is to go to the R.A., so I shall see it again in the spring.

Dec. 16th.—I don't know why I have

written so little in my note-books these last few days. I find the greatest difficulty in putting down my thoughts. After I have written a sentence, I feel it is not what I meant to say, so I scratch it out again. Then other things get into my head, and I find it impossible to concentrate my interest on what I am doing. This morning I wanted very much to finish the hundredth page of "Cyril Gordon," but, try as I would, I could not do it.

I quite understand what it is that makes artists talk of days of "inspiration." Yet I don't feel stupid. I am only dissatisfied with what I have done, and doubt whether it is worth pushing further.

Dec. 17*th.*—I am at the garden now nearly every afternoon and potter in the greenhouse. I like going snipping about with the scissors. It gives Jacky a run too. In fact I go more for his sake than my own.

This afternoon Mr. Ridley and the Pasqualigos came, and we had tea in the little

pavilion that overlooks the lagoon. It was so mild that we stayed on till five. When they went I gave them some primulas and winter roses. George cannot bear the garden at this time of the year. He says it is a damp hole. I don't agree with him.

Dec. 18th.—A long newsy letter from Madeline. The wedding is to take place at the end of January. Cuthbert joins her to-morrow in Scotland, and stays over Christmas. She is really in love with him, and I am sure they will get on well together. She wants very much to know what I am doing.

Dec. 22nd.—I am again very hopeless. Everything turns out badly in spite of all my pains. After last evening I may as well give up entertaining altogether. I can certainly never try another dinner party.

This is what happened.

When we went in to dinner I was sure the party would be a success. I was wearing my white moire antique with the ostrich feather trimmings round the decolletage and

skirt, one string of pearls, and my hair pulled up behind.

As soon as we were seated and I had seen that everything was just as it ought to be, I gave myself up to the conduct of the debate, for I hold the old-fashioned idea that the hostess should give the tone to the conversation if she can. I therefore threw myself into it, and presently all was going as well as anyone could wish.

After we had got through several courses, I began to hear George's voice rising above all the others. It has some tones in it that catch the ear. I listened, wishing to know how he was getting on, and heard him describing to Countess Trachwitz the new cover he had ordered for our second gondola.

"It will be of red cloth, with tassels outside, and the lining of Russian leather stamped with gold thistles," he was saying. "Warmth of colour is what I aim at. I am tired of your dingy Venetian black."

"No! no! That cannot be!" exclaimed Mme. Trachwitz in horror.

Her voice carried to the end of the table, and the Admiral stopped to listen.

"A friend of mine, who was with me last year, used to say"—George was continuing—

"But under the Republic," interrupted the Admiral, appealing to us, "under the Republic a red 'felze' would have been prohibited under pains and penalties. Your husband wishes to upset our customs"—turning to me.

"Perhaps he does," I said laughing, "and he begins with the gondolas. His, I tell him, will be worthy of a place in our Lord Mayor's procession."

But George held on. "My friend, when I was taking him round the city last spring and the tide was low, said he preferred crossing all the bridges in Venice to riding over open sewers in a funeral car. That was smart, wasn't it?"

"George," I called out, wishing to put an end to the conversation, "You must keep such ideas to yourself. Countess

Trachwitz, I am sure, will never agree with you."

The moment I had said the words I repented. He was not to be put down. This new felze was a touchy point with him —one of the numerous fads he took up and let drop again. He was not going to give way—I saw it in his face.

"Mind your own business, Olympia," he said. "I shall fit up my own gondola to please myself. Don't you think it will look well, Mme. Brandi?"

"I? Oh! I don't quite know, if you ask me," said Teresa, warily, as she nibbled a burnt almond. "The colour might be pretty, but I don't quite like the idea of the thistles. Wouldn't it be uncomfortable to sit on thistles?"

We all laughed—the Admiral immoderately, in a taunting way that made George still crosser. In the meanwhile the dinner was progressing.

"There are some grouse coming," I whispered to Scandiglia. "I shall expect

you to do justice to them, because they are my compatriots—they come from Northumberland."

"I have eaten of that game once at Portsmouth, but I did not know from what part of England it came. Now that you tell me it is from yours, I shall eat it with devotion."

"How disappointing you are!" I exclaimed. "I thought it would have been a novelty. But it is impossible to surprise you sailors. You have been everywhere, and seen everything, and tasted everything. That is why we admire you so much," I added, in a voice that made Mr. Ridley look round.

Up to this point my dinner party had been a real success.

As I leant back in the half light I could have laughed in sheer gaiety of heart at the sight of my guests. There I was—in the position I had always envied as a girl—a hostess at the head of a beautiful table surrounded by pleasant people. What could be nicer?

A spot there was on my sun, to be sure, but I did not wish to see it. I was enjoying myself and so were the others. Why should not George do the same?

But when I looked towards him I saw a wild, troublesome look on his face. He was fidgetting about on his seat, and crumbling his bread into pellets.

"What is it, Markham?" I asked of the butler who was wandering round.

"I don't know, mum," said the man. "Master ain't pleased with his dinner. He wants the 'aricots at once and they are not dished up yet."

"Get what your master wishes," I said severely, as I saw George beckon again with a jerk of the head to the servant, and then give him an order.

Markham went to the sideboard and after some hesitation sent Phillips back to him with a vegetable dish.

Then I heard George mutter in a voice husky with rage—

"Did I say mashed potatoes? Did I say

mashed potatoes? Bring me the greens, you d——d fool!"

It was just loud enough for everyone to hear, and also just indistinct enough for everyone to pretend they had not heard it, but it fell like a douche of cold water on me, and I cannot say how thankful I was to hear Mr. Ridley, just as though nothing had happened, continue in a calm authoritative voice the description of a colliery accident.

"They are there now—at this moment," he was saying across the table to Teresa; "twelve of them, men, women, and children, and there is little chance of their ever getting out unless they manage to reach one of the higher galleries, and even then the gases, the want of air and light, not to speak of their sufferings from hunger—"

"And the rats," murmured Teresa.

"Oh, yes, the rats—there are legions of them. In our Cumberland pits the men have to keep their boots in patent safes. I caught one myself when I was a boy,

that had a cross of white hair on his back. Strange, wasn't it? Just as though you had taken a piece of white chalk and marked him. The Irish colliers said he had been blessed by one of their saints, so we let him run."

By this time the grouse had appeared.

"Delicious!" cried the admiral. "Delicious!" echoed Morri. "Those birds are found nowhere but in England?" he inquired.

"Nowhere!" I answered at random. "They live on the vast plains of the north, and their chase begins in August."

Mr. Ridley looked at me.

"But when they have been decimated by the sportsmen, they form themselves for protection into great flocks, with sentinels and outposts just like an army. At the cry of alarm they vanish into the mist with a great whirr of their wings. Is it not so, Monsieur Ridley?"

But in spite of our efforts a gloom had fallen over most of the party. The only

persons who appeared more lively than before, were George and Teresa.

That vivacious little widow, indeed, was rolling her eyes about in the oddest manner as she chattered to Morri. He, of course, believed it was for him, but I, who understood her, saw at once that she was making faces to save herself from fits of laughter. She had seen the absurdity of it all.

As for George, he was beaming like a schoolboy. It was enough for him to have scandalized his two highly respectable neighbours, to feel in the best of tempers again, so that when Teresa with a mischievous glance began, "Mr. Braithwaite, do tell me what you think—I must know. Marchese Morri won't believe it, he is such a sceptic—don't women detest flattery?" He laughed, Ha! ha! ha! and replied, "That depends on the flatterer, I should say."

"Of course," she said, still fixing him with her violet eyes. "Of course, to show our admiration for someone by whom we are admired, is the pleasantest thing of all,

but is that flattery, strictly speaking? Is that not the exaggeration of the truth of our own feelings?" (lowering her eyes). Then, after a pause: "I love exaggeration."

"Do you?" he said. "I don't wonder at it, but, if I told a woman I admired her, and she answered she did not believe me, I would never go near her again."

"And pray, why not?"

"I should tell her, that as she thought me a liar, I was evidently not the sort of man she ought to be seen talking to."

"That's an odd way of making love! I am sure you are dreadfully callous to the feelings of women."

"It's *my* way," he replied. "If I did not put my foot down at once, I should always get the worst of it with the fair ones. With me it's plain 'Yes' or 'No,' without ceremony on either side."

"Oh, you shocking man!" said Teresa, fanning herself violently.

At this point I made the sign, and we sailed out of the dining-room.

"It shall be my last!" I said to myself as the Admiral murmured some gallant phrases.

Dec. 25th.—Christmas day again! A cold, leaden sky. There is no wind, but the palaces and churches appear as though the atmosphere had been blown clean away from them. They stand out so naked to the eye, with the Grand Canal like a slate-coloured ribbon twisting among them. The only object in this dreary landscape which gives pleasure, is a flock of sea gulls from the lagoon which are circling beneath my window. One of these sweet creatures has just passed close to me, showing, as he turned in the air, the soft brown markings on his breast, and his long orange legs tucked up under his tail.

I might have decorated the house with holly and mistletoe if I had thought it worth while. We dine at the Dormers to-night, where Christmas is kept up in the proper way, but I am sure I shall not enjoy myself. Hélène Trachwitz will be there

after dinner, and *he* can devote himself to her. She is a pretty little thing with nothing much in her.

Dec. 26th.—It was snowing when we came away last night, and this morning all the roofs are white. I took Alice Curzon to the garden this afternoon, and we snow-balled one another for half an hour.

Dec. 27th.—Some Tableaux Vivants to-night at the Curzons. Teresa and George as Judith and Holofernes.

Dec. 29th.—Everyone was at the Fenice last evening. It is a charming house, and Tannhäuser was well given. Mr. Ridley stayed in our box during the last act. He was rather depressed, I thought.

I said to him, "Countess Trachwitz is over there. Have you been to her?"

"Yes. I was there between the acts."

"And Hélène—that velvet ribbon twisted in her hair becomes her!"

"Yes."

"She is charming!"

"Very."

"Did you tell her you were going away?"

"No—why should I?"

"Because it might interest her."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What does that mean?"

"That it is indifferent to me."

"What actors men are!"

January 1st.—This is my Journal's birthday, so I wish it many happy returns, for it has become one of my best friends.

Jan. 3rd.—I went out with George in the launch this afternoon. The air was so clear that we could see the Tyrolese mountains. At four we were back in Venice. After I had done some shopping I went into St. Mark's.

Coming into the church from the Piazza, where a fresh *tramontana* was blowing, I soon felt warm and comfortable. The currentless air scented with a faint odour of incense seemed, enclosed by the massive walls, to be as old as the building itself. Already the setting sun was pouring powdery beams through the west window above my head towards the choir, and

lighting up the figures on the rood-screen and high altar.

Other people had entered with me, and, beneath the long Jacob's ladder that streamed down the church, were picking their way towards the northern transept, where service was being celebrated.

I went with the crowd and sat down, resting my back against one of the piers of the nave. There I was in shadow.

Except where the sun was brightening it, the church presently began to throw out from the ground upwards one monotonous tone that deepened only where it passed into the gloom of a side chapel. In this wave of mystery, that followed so quickly upon the light, the people that passed in front of me appeared unreal—their faces harshly catching the glow from the west while their figures melted into the background. If I had half closed my eyes I should have seen little more than a row of ruddy masks.

It is not a favourite time of day with

me—the hour of sunset. It is then that any troubles I may have depress me.

Soon my thoughts became affected with a melancholy that went on increasing. It was an aching that pained and yet pleased me. During the last weeks I had often felt it, but to-day it was joined to a sentiment of resignation and piety. I had brought it to St. Mark's to enshrine it along with the heartaches of past generations. How many poor women had come there with their griefs! How many tears had wetted that rugged pavement! I fell on my knees.

When I rose to go, two figures brushed past me. In the obscurity I scarcely recognized in them Countess Trachwitz and her sister-in-law. They went on and joined the service in the Chapel of the Virgin. A few people still lingered in the nave as I passed down it on my way to the door. I walked carefully, for the marble floor rises and falls in imitation, it is said, of the waves of the sea. Half way down I

stopped for a moment to watch the sunlight flickering up above the Byzantine mosaics of saints and apostles, and observed a single figure leaning over the balustrade of one of the galleries. There was something about the attitude that I recognized at once —it was Mr. Ridley.

At first the thought crossed my mind that he had come with the Trachwitz's or was waiting for them—then, that if he had wished to see Hélène he would have stationed himself in the gallery of the transept that overlooks the service.

I hesitated a moment, and then I went up the narrow perpendicular staircase that leads to the gallery.

When he heard my footsteps and saw who it it was he gave a start of surprise.

We shook hands without a word.

"Are you alone—quite by yourself up here?" I said.

"Quite—unless you count them," waving his hat towards the figures in the vaulting.

"You could not have been in better company."

"Too good for me," he answered smiling. "I was on the point of going down and leaving them. They look so forbidding that I felt like an intruder. Besides," he added, "there is always the chance, when one gets up into a gallery like this, of being locked in for the night."

"I saw the verger as I came up and told him to wait."

We leant over the marble railing and looked down. I had never been up there before, and the scene impressed me.

Below all was dimness, as though a dusky veil lay suspended between us and the small foreshortened figures that passed up and down the church. The proportions of the building gained by this sobriety of tone an added majesty which amplified the massive piers of the nave as they rose out of the gloom and gave distinction to every retreating line.

But above on our level, where the west

window shed a glow from the amber-coloured sky outside, the detail of the roof was still visible until it receded in golden bendings towards the apse. And really, as he had said, one felt oneself an intruder up there: for the colossal figures of saints and apostles curving overhead appeared in their rough dignity a very company of the elect.

"I was so glad to see you coming," he began again, "I was wishing to talk. For three days I haven't spoken to a soul."

"But why?" I asked reproachfully.

"I don't know," he answered; "there are times when conversation bores me, and then I keep away from everybody and get on as well as I can. Besides, I have been very busy preparing for my start on the 8th."

"Then it is fixed—really fixed for the 8th?"

"Irrevocably!"

"How coldly you pronounce that word! I should have thought that when you were depressed you might have come to see your

friends instead of avoiding them. If you look upon me as one of them, you might have tried me."

"Oh, it is being with you that makes being without you so difficult;" and then he added, "There is no other way out of it."

"So you are not obliged to go—you are only hurrying away on my account."

"You must not reproach me for what cannot be helped. I owe it to them all to join them as soon as possible. They expect me, and I cannot fail them. It is my duty. You would not have me forget that."

"No!"

"It makes me miserable—very miserable to go. Sometimes I fancy that no one can be such a poor-spirited devil as I—don't look so severe—I am telling you the truth, if you will deign to listen to me."

"I can't listen to you," I said; "you know how it is. Don't make it more difficult through a want of self-control, whatever that may cost you. Look upon

me as your friend—your dearest friend—and let us say good-bye when the day comes, bravely, with the hope of meeting again in England."

"Then I shall say it here," he interrupted fiercely, "before these witnesses. When this hour comes round each day I shall think of you as I see you now in your beauty, with those golden figures looking down upon you and this great silent church about you. The rest I shall try to forget."

"Oh Alick," I said, holding out my hand, "Don't let us part like this!"

He took my hand and kissed it.

"I am a fool, and you must forgive me. Now there is only one thing I can do, and that is to wish you happiness until we next meet."

"Thank you," I said, and burst into tears.

Jan. 4th—I am tired and ill this morning. I can't get my thoughts together. I have seen nothing of George all day. He is dining with Mrs. Curzon to-night. I have written to excuse myself. I shall

stay at home, and if I feel up to it, I shall look over my note-books. For three days I have not written a line. Perhaps when I am sitting here alone by the fire they may stir me up a little.

Jan. 5th.—I have had a dreadful blow, and I don't know what to do. All my note-books have disappeared from my writing table. They must have been stolen.

Last night after dinner I went to unlock my jewel-box, where I keep the key of my drawer. My maid generally has my bunch. She was downstairs having her supper, but I found the keys, unlocked the jewel-box, and taking the key, opened the drawer. It was empty.

I hunted about the room and then rang for the maid.

She knew nothing. When she went downstairs at seven she sometimes left the keys in the dressing table. She had done so last evening and the evening before. Otherwise they were always in her pocket. She had never missed even a hairpin

from the Signora's table. What had the Signora lost?

"It's nothing of value," I said, trying to appear unconcerned. "Some papers have disappeared which I believed were in the writing table. To-morrow I shall find them, no doubt."

The girl gave a sigh of relief.

When she had left I paced up and down the room as I went over the facts of the case.

I had not written for three days, or even looked into the drawer. The day before yesterday I had come home late. If the maid had left my keys about when she went downstairs at seven, then it was probable, that, during my absence on that evening, someone, who knew where to find them, had come into my room, opened my jewel box, taken the key of my writing table and abstracted my note-books.

Who could that person be? Reason told me that it was George!

Yes! George! It could be no one else.

My pride was up in arms as I kept repeating to myself—What does he mean by it? What does he mean by it? Does he think that he can treat *me* like that?

At twelve o'clock he would be coming home from the Curzon's. I would meet him in his room the moment he returned, and accuse him of taking them. I should then see if he had the effrontery to deny it.

I waited, impatiently passing over in my mind what I would say and do, until about a quarter past twelve, I heard the voices of the gondoliers below and knew that he had returned.

Between his room and mine was a door that locked itself on my side. The key was in it, and I stood ready to open at a moment's notice. At last he came heavily into his room, and I was on the point of entering, when I heard him call to Marshall —(I had forgotten Marshall).

"Come here and look sharp. I can't stand it any longer! These infernal

pumps are playing the devil with my feet!"

His words made me start. They recalled to me one of the first entries I had made in the "Cyril Gordon" note-book, when in my search for truth nothing had seemed too trivial for notice.

My words, as far as I can recall them, were these:—

"Cyril is a martyr to his feet. He has fourteen pairs of boots and seven pairs of shoes, and yet he cannot walk a mile without pain.

"The reason is that they are all a size too small for him. I observe that before a change in the weather, his mind often reverts to that period of his existence when bare-footed he wandered about on the Mexican frontier."

The recollection of that and many similar entries checked my impulse to demand an explanation of him. He was there, but I felt no longer equal to the part. A sense of shame and mortification bade me remain

in my room. I put out my candle and crept into bed.

"Are you asleep, Olympia?" I heard him call through the door.

I made no answer, hardly daring to breathe in the cowardice of my heart. For what could I say in my defence if he asked me to explain how it was that behind his back I was compiling a minute record of all his actions? If he requested to know the object I had in so doing, could I confess that it was my intention to give to the world a portrait of him just as he was from my point of view? Could I further confess that it was my intention to publish the book under cover of a pseudonym and say nothing to him about it? In fact, to let him live in complete ignorance that his personality had been delivered to thousands of readers to laugh and perhaps to weep over? Was that fair play? It was not, I was bound to say, and yet how else was the thing possible? If I had asked, and he had granted his consent it would have been better, no

doubt, but the artistic side of my work would have suffered. His singleness of mind would have gone. Conscious that all his doings and sayings were marked and noted down he would have become affected, and my portrait of him would have been a failure. I could neither argue with him nor explain the matter away.

Better to let him begin! That he would probably do as soon as he had read the "Cyril Gordon" manuscript far enough. He is a slow reader, but in four or five days at the latest he must arrive at some pages written during our visit to England which would make him speak out. When the storm burst I should be better prepared than I felt at that moment.

But putting the rights and wrongs of the matter aside, I felt that a great calamity had befallen me. All my activity and ambition were dependent on the possession of my notes. They were the material for my novel, and they were in his hands.

Could I recover them from him?

There were two ways in which I might do so; either by stealing them back as he had stolen them from me, or by inducing him to return them. My self-respect forbade me the first. Even if I succeeded I was sure he would do his best to deprive me of them a second time. Our household would then be the scene of a curious, but disgraceful comedy—the struggle for the possession of the manuscripts—in which the Master abstracts from the desk of the Mistress certain papers which she in her turn regains from him. He then seeks to steal them again, and she to hide them, and so on. All this, too, without a word being exchanged between them.

No, that would not do. It might amuse the servants, perhaps, like any other farce, but it would not do.

On the other hand, I had but little hope of being able to induce him to surrender them.

For some weeks past, our intimacy had limited itself considerably. A growing nervousness and irritation had made his

society unpleasant to me and mine to him. We were in a certain sense estranged from each other, and in consequence my influence over him was weakened.

The train of reasoning that carried me so far, continued its course through many hours of that miserable night.

My notes, my precious notes, were gone, and I could not replace them. Were I to try and write them from memory I might be able to recollect parts, and to reproduce certain favourite passages, but without the manuscript how could I attain the same accuracy of patiently worded description? The frankness and glow of work done straight from nature would be lost. For me the pith of the matter lay in that. I knew my force. I had studied myself since I began in earnest to put pen to paper. It was the truth of my impressions and the vigour of my phraseology that made my work remarkable. I could see things well and express them well. I could find the word and place it just where it ought to stand in the line of battle.

All that would be lost—I could not begin again.

Farewell then, to my novel—I had sacrificed myself for it, and now it was nothing but dust and ashes.

George had thought out his plan and executed it cleverly. He was triumphant, but he should feel that triumphs are sometimes dearly bought. In the darkness I shook my clenched hand in the direction of his chamber from which at regular intervals the sound of his breathing reached me.

"You shall pay me for this! You shall pay dearly for this!" I muttered. But my threats possessed no power to disturb him. His respirations rose and fell with just the same regularity as before. It ended by calming my nerves with the mechanical rhythm, and presently I fell asleep.

Jan. 6th.—I am calm again to-day, and I wonder why the loss of my note-books excited me as much as it did. They are gone. He has them, and perhaps he is

amusing himself with them. I hope he will enjoy seeing himself described from life.

When we met this morning at luncheon he was the same as usual, only I remarked a tone of greater authority in his voice when he addressed me. He was also more amiable than he has been for some time. I have ceased to study him, and I feel callous about everything. I don't care whether he has them or not, or what he does with them. If he were to give them back to-morrow I would put them away and never look at them again.

The loss of them has made me consider the matter from every side. I argued it out with myself last night. This morning I argue it out again, but not alone.

I seek to justify myself in the opinion of another.

Would he approve of it? I am sure he would not.

He would say:—

"Your personal ambition has carried you too far. You owe your husband an excuse

for your conduct towards him. After that, no doubt, he will apologize for what he has done. It is for you to take the first step."

This, I am sure, would be his advice. I will act upon it. My pride shall not stand in the way. I will explain everything to George and ask his pardon. If he receives it badly, I shall at least have the satisfaction that I tried to make amends.

To-morrow, when I feel up to it, I will speak.

* * * * * * * * * *

FLORENCE, *Jan. 12th.*—I am sitting here writing at the window where just a year ago I made the first entries in my diary. I was gay then and full of hope. I am now sad, and cold as ice. I am a failure—let me confess it to myself—a complete failure!

It brings the tears to my eyes to turn the pages and see what I thought and said then. I seem to be reading the confessions of quite another person—of some bright confident girl whom I knew long ago.

But let me drag my memory back to the date of the last entry. I would willingly shirk it, but when it is all told I can throw my pen out of the window. A few lines will suffice.

When I wrote on the evening of the 6th,

I had resolved to come to an explanation with George, and I was prepared to ask his pardon for the line I had taken in using him as the subject of my novel. I was prepared for a reconciliation, knowing that he was not ungenerous.

All this was rather to clear my character in my own eyes, than to soften any particular harshness in his behaviour to me, for, excepting a greater show of authority, his manner had not changed in the least since the evening of the 3rd, the date on which he had undoubtedly taken my books.

I was perplexed at this, and, I own, a little piqued that my analysis had produced so little effect on him.

At luncheon on the 9th, I told him that I meant to go to the garden, where I hoped he would join me about four o'clock. I judged that, as my explanation might lead to a scene, it had better take place out of earshot of the servants.

It was a sunny afternoon, and when I reached the garden I walked about for

some time reading Daponte's memoirs, and thinking how I should broach the subject. It was early. Three o'clock had just struck, and he would not be there for another hour.

At the end of the vine-covered pergola that stretches down the garden there was a greenhouse facing south, and before it a bare space with a bench and a rough table on which the gardener had left a quantity of empty flower-pots. On the ground near at hand was a heap of rich mould and a heap of sand for the potting out of some young plants. Seeing these things all ready I thought I would pass the time till George appeared in doing some of them myself, so I put on my garden gloves, thinking how wide Domenico would open his eyes when he came back and found his work finished for him.

In the meanwhile Jacky with equal ardour fell to work on the heap of sand, burrowing with might and main.

The time passed quickly, and just before

four, when George arrived, I had finished quite a row of pots.

Jacky by that time had almost disappeared; only the end of his tail could be seen waving out of the burrow he had made in the sand.

When I heard George's voice calling, "Where the devil have you got to, Olympia?" I looked over the hedge.

He came down the path and stopped when he saw what I was doing. Standing where he was—about a foot lower than the potting yard, only his head and shoulders appeared above the top of the hedge.

"What's all that tomfoolery about?" he asked.

I saw he was put out, so I answered carelessly, "I am working, don't you see?"

"Doing gardener's work. I don't pay that lazy scoundrel for you to pot his plants for him. Come away from that messing mulluck!"

"In a minute. I have four more to finish."

"Drop it at once," he said, stamping his foot.

I turned my back on him and went on with the filling. He watched me sulkily over the hedge for a time, and then came into the yard through the gate. I paid no attention to him. I knew anything I might say would only lead to a squabble in the present state of his nerves, so I went on mixing the earth and filling the pots.

"Those gondoliers are the filthiest hounds in creation," he began. "I have just told Salvatore he may pack and go at the end of the week, and if I have any more trouble with them the others shall follow him."

"What has Salvatore done?" I asked.

"He has been at it again, trying on his games with me. He wanted me this afternoon to pay four francs fifty for a broom that only costs three francs in the Rialto. When I told him to leave my service, he only laughed."

"Salvatore is no better and no worse than any other gondolier in Venice, He thinks he has the right to 'do' you if he can."

"Oh! does he!"

"Yes, and if you send him away and take another in his place, you won't be a bit better off, nor will it be any punishment to him. He is a splendid oar—he won the prize at the regatta, and that covers him with prestige. He will find another place at once."

"You always side with the gondoliers. You are in love with the man, that's my belief!"

"George!" I said hotly, "you had better not say such things."

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "the cap fits!"

I did not reply. I could have boxed his ears, but I restrained myself knowing how rude and common he was when his temper got the better of him. I gave up all idea of speaking to him about the books just then.

"Are you going to keep me here much longer?" he asked.

"You see I have almost finished."

"And what's he doing," he cried, pointing to Jacky's tail waving out of the burrow and the sand he was discharging behind him.

"What are you after, you little cur!" snatching up a garden trowel and going to the sand heap.

"Let Jacky alone!" I cried. "I won't have you touch him!"

"Be blowed! Here! I'll teach you to meddle with things!" and he seized him by the tail and gave him a blow.

Jacky, feeling himself attacked from behind, struggled violently, trying to turn in the narrow tunnel and defend himself, but George holding him firmly commenced cutting and hacking at him with the trowel. From out of the burrow I could hear the cries of the poor dog, half suffocated by the sand.

It was too much! Was I going to let him maltreat Jacky in that way?

"George," I begged, running towards him, "leave off, leave off, you will kill him!"

"Keep away!" he bawled, turning upon me his flushed face and striking with the trowel. "I'll do for him this time—you shall see!"

I looked round for help. There was no one near. The gondoliers at the other end of the garden were too far to hear a scream. I could not speak—words would have choked me. I only looked round for a weapon. Near me, under the hedge, was a pile of poplar staves, such as are used to support the vines of the pergola. I fetched one.

He was there still on his kness, savagely hacking at my poor dog whose yelpings went to my heart.

"There!" I cried, as I raised the stick above my head and brought it down with all my force across his back, "take that!" He sprang up in a moment, and with the trowel in his hand, made for me.

"Take care!" I screamed, advancing on him and striking him again and again as he trampled through the line of pots and scattered them in all directions.

There must have been something in my face that made him step back out of reach of my blows.

Then as he stood there with the evening sun lighting up his purple face and white hat, I closed my eyes, and rushing in at him, pushed him backwards through the hedge and down into the garden path below. Oh! it was dreadful! I stopped short, scared by what had happened, but he gathered himself up and set off down the garden with the long muddy mark of the stake striping him from shoulder to shoulder. He did not even look back, but went on rubbing from first one sleeve and then the other the marks of his fall; and I, seeing him go, sat down trembling on the potting table with a dry burning in my throat. For some time I was quite bewildered, till Jacky, who had been hiding

in the bushes, hobbled out on three legs and began to caress me. I took him in my arms and examined all his cuts and bruises—a little more and he would have been crippled for life—and when I felt better, carried him down to the boat, half expecting to find George waiting for me.

But he had gone home in his gondola.

After what had passed between us, I was not inclined to follow him, so I had myself rowed to an hotel and sent the men home to fetch my maid. Then I engaged a room and locked myself into it.

That night, when the excitement was over and I was able to think rationally about the matter, I came to an important decision.

We were not fit to live together, so we must separate.

This is how I argued with myself.

The disgraceful scene which took place this afternoon is the outcome of our incompatibility of temper. The fault may

lie with him, with me, or with both of us; but the fact remains that we don't get on together as well as we ought. Instead of making each other more and more miserable, it is better that we separate quietly, and so remain apart until we believe our tempers to be improved.

In the meanwhile I will return to Florence and live in the villa, leaving him free to do as he likes. If he chooses to write to me as a friend, I will answer in the same spirit. In this way we shall learn perhaps to appreciate one another better than we do at present.

This was the result of my reflections, and I decided that when I saw him on the morrow I would ask him to agree to it.

My thoughts then reverted to Mr. Ridley. On the morrow, by a strange coincidence, we should both be leaving Venice. He by steamer to the east, and I by train to Florence. The memory of the hours we had spent together would be a bond be-

tween us in the future. Yet I wished to write him a line before he left. He would start at three o'clock, and I, if George did not prevent me, at half past one. There would be time then to send it on board from the station.

Before I went to bed I wrote:—

"My dear friend,

"I write this to bid you farewell, and to tell you how the thought of the pleasant hours we have spent together in Venice, consoles me at a very trying moment. It is not now probable that we shall meet in London next spring, as my plans are definitely changed. I shall often think of you, and pray God to protect you. In haste,

"OLYMPIA BRAITHWAITE."

When I was wide awake the next morning, and remembered where I was, and how I came to be there, and the decision I had come to the night before, my spirits went up.

I am not gloomy or despondent by nature. If things go wrong I am depressed for a time, but then a reaction takes place, and in spite of the arguments of my common sense, which tells me I ought to lament, I rejoice exceedingly.

It was in this frame of mind that I received George at half past eleven. He came in with a beaming smile, and as he held out his hand to me, said, just as though nothing had happened :—

"What a bright sunny day, Olympia! How are you this morning?"

"Quite well. And how, pray, are you?"

"Oh, I—just the same as usual."

"That's all right," I answered in a voice as cheery as his. "I was a trifle anxious about you. I thought you might be feeling some pain about the back."

"Don't think of that, little woman," he laughed in a rollicking way. "It was a smart tap you gave me across the shoulders, but I deserved it, and no man must complain if he gets what he deserves. You've

a heavy hand when your monkey's up—that's a fact—a damned heavy hand. But I'm all the prouder of you. I can hit out if I like as hard as anyone, but I can take a thrashing too and feel none the worse for it. Strike as hard as you can, I say, the harder the better—don't spare me; lay it on—only natural weapons—no knives or firearms, I bar them."

"George," I said, rather disconcerted by his good temper, but laughing in spite of myself, "it may be nothing to you to quarrel in the way we did yesterday, but to me it is a very serious matter."

"Oh, go along!" he said, "bygones are bygones. We shall settle down better now that you have let off steam. Shake hands!"

"No!" I replied, stepping back.

"Well, now, what have you to complain of? I tell you I love you more than ever I did. You are the most finished woman I ever met in the New World or the Old: is not that enough? Here, boy," he added,

addressing himself to Jacky, who lay curled up on an armchair, with one eye shining beneath his long hair, "Here, I've not forgotten you, eat that, and let's be friends," taking a biscuit out of his pocket and throwing it to the dog.

But Jacky was not to be cajoled. He paid no attention whatever to the biscuit, but kept his eye fixed on George.

"Pick it up, lad—see. Here's another to show there's no ill-feeling."

But when he approached, Jacky slowly got up and showed his teeth.

I knew what was passing in his old Scotch head, and his irreconcilable behaviour strengthened me in my determination, which had wavered before.

"You can't tempt him."

"Now, sulky"—said he, going to the chair and holding out the biscuit.

"Don't go near him, George, he has not forgotten you."

"Well, if he won't, he won't. He can't be sorer about the back than I am. When

the doctor came last night, just to see that no bones were broken, he asked me whether I had been fighting with a windmill. He punched me all over, and when he came to my left arm I made him raise the skin and get out the pearl I carried there. Here it is, Olympia, and if you like it, it's yours."

Saying this, he pulled out his handkerchief, and spreading it on the marble floor at my feet, placed the pearl in the middle of it and then sprang nimbly back.

"It is beautiful," I said, "but I'm not going to accept it, or anything else from you. If you will sit down and listen to what I have got to say, we shall understand one another the sooner."

"Understand one another?" he exclaimed, dropping into a chair.

"Yes! just listen to me——"

"My lady," he said, leaning languidly back and fanning himself with his hat, "don't lay it on too thick. I can't follow you if you do."

"You seem to think," I began, "that

the whole thing has blown over, and that we can go on living together as though nothing had happened."

"Nothing had happened! I tell you that since yesterday I am a changed man—a reformed character. You bet I shall be more reasonable in future. After the drubbing you gave me, I worship the very ground you tread upon."

"Rubbish!" I said.

"I do—I tell you solemnly."

"But that does not alter my feelings towards you. Since you stole my note-books I have lost all respect for you."

"Oh!" he said, reddening, "that's where the shoe pinches!"

"If you wished to see them—to read them—why did you not ask me for them, instead of acting like a thief?"

"Read them!" he cried, "no, thank you, I've no time to waste. When I want to read I get a newspaper; there's better stuff in that than in any of your lack-a-daisical novels. But if you want the

books, I've got them safe under lock and key, and they are at your disposal."

"You are very ready to give them back," I said, bitterly.

"Oh, I don't want them."

"Then why in the name of heaven did you take them?"

"To stop you——"

"To stop me!"

"Yes—to put an extinguisher on that highfalutin literary attitude of yours. Do you think I am such a soft one as not to have seen all along the game you have been making of me? She may write what she likes about her George, said I, but she doesn't know for all that what sort of a man he is."

"Then you stole them just for the sake of stealing and to annoy me?"

He did not answer, but paced up and down the room in a truculent, aggressive way.

"You did not even look into them to see what I have been working at for so

many months, to try and understand what it was that interested me so much?"

"I can't read handwriting."

"That's an excuse. You read my letters easily enough."

"Come now, what's the use of talking? you shall have them back."

"I don't want them."

"Let me fetch them," he said, coaxingly, I will go at once." And he moved towards the door.

"Stay here!" I cried, stamping my foot.

He came back with a look of mock resignation.

"George," I said, when I married you, you professed to take a great interest in literature and art. You told me once that you had never spent such pleasant mornings anywhere as in the Uffizi Gallery. Was there any truth in it?"

"I don't know. I've dropped that sort of thing now."

"Then," I said, rising and confronting him, "I made a great mistake when I

married you. It was a great mistake, and I am heartily sorry for it. I was young and very ignorant about men. That is my only excuse. The consequence is that we don't get on together, and the future will be worse than the past. We can't go on leading this cat and dog existence any longer, can we?"

"I don't mind it," he replied, stolidly.

"But I do—I can't stand it—it will drive me mad!"

"What's changed?" he asked. "Don't you get all you want, and a good deal more besides? What's all this tall talk about art? Now you've been married six months it's time to drop it."

"It's time for you and me to part," I said, firmly, "and if you don't see it, so much the worse for you."

There was a long pause, and then I said:

"Oh! George, be reasonable about this, and don't throw obstacles in the way! Let us leave one another as friends—let us write to one another if you will, but let us

live apart, at least for a time. I will go back to Florence, and from you I will ask nothing, but that you wait until time, perhaps, changes my mind. If you love me as you say you do, you will let me go."

"You are a whimsical woman," he said. "You don't know your mind."

"I know it perfectly!"

"You want to go back and live with that old woman in Florence, do you? You will be nothing in the world without me."

"Leave me to get on with the world by myself."

"Well, we shall see," and he went to the window and stood with his back turned, and his shoulders up to his ears, jangling the keys in his pocket.

I saw he was meditating, so I stepped over to Jacky and stroked him while I waited for an answer.

He was talking to himself, and I heard him mutter, "If she wants to go, hang it! why shouldn't she? She'll come round

soon enough if I give her her head. Till then I can run the establishment single-handed. There's no difficulty about that!"

"Well, now," he cried, pivoting suddenly round as though to catch me laughing behind his back, "do you really want to cut loose on your own account?"

"I want to go back to Florence this afternoon. All my preparations are made, and I shall take the half past one o'clock train if you will give your consent."

"H'm!" he said, thoughtfully.

"Why do you hesitate?" I asked. "You don't want me to go on living for an indefinite time in this hotel, do you?"

He smiled at my threat. "Cooking good?"

"Don't make jokes. I am in earnest."

"Well, Olympia darling, you will always have your own way, whatever it costs, and you are always so cocksure about everything that it's a pity to oppose you. If you will go, go! I'll not stop you."

"Thank you," I said, going to him and

holding out my hand. "I knew you were generous, George. Thank you! Thank you very much."

"Won't you pick up that?" he inquired, pointing to the black pearl lying on the handkerchief.

"When I come back you can give it me if you like."

"Take it now!"

"No, not now."

"Why won't you?"

"I am superstitious."

"It's your infernal pride!"

"Perhaps. I told you I would accept nothing from you."

"Then here goes!" he cried, as a scarlet flush mounted to his face, and with that he brought down his heel with a stamp upon the pearl and crushed it to powder.

As soon as he had gone I jumped for joy. I was free to go if only he did not change his mind and stop me from taking the train. There was still that danger. In half an hour I was ready; my maid and

the luggage were already in the gondola, and we started.

It was one of those gay winter noons that are more radiant even than the spring. All down the great curving waterway of the Grand Canal the palace fronts were veined with blue shadows that tangled themselves round the flashing windows, and repeated themselves finely in the water below. The tide was trembling—nearly full, and round the gondola as it went the sea gulls turned with incredible grace and softness. It did my heart good to see them and hear their wild cries. Soon we were passing our palace. From the flag-staff on the balcony the Union Jack was fluttering in the breeze at half-mast. I guessed that was a reproach meant to catch my eye. George was always signalling since he had learned the use of flags on the "Seamew." He is there watching my going away, I said, as I saw a field glass flash in the depths of the dining-room window. *Addio! Addio!*

It was all right! I should get away without any fuss! That was all I wanted.

* * * * * *

Here my diary ends. I shall write no more about myself. I have settled down in my old home and my own friends are about me. They cheer and encourage me. They are still enthusiastic, and in the last year some of them have done great things. Among them I feel all my former interests revive.

POSTSCRIPT.

FLORENCE, *May 20th.*

I LITTLE thought when I closed my diary in January that in a few months I should have to open it again to write this sad postscript. I only do so now because I wish to record the details of my last interview with George.

It is now three weeks since a telegram from Venice summoned me to his bedside. We had corresponded regularly since I left him in January, and in none of his letters had he mentioned his health. It was, therefore, a surprise for me to learn that he required my presence.

I started at once alone, for my maid was away for a holiday, but I cannot say I did so with any good will. I believed that it

was either one of his headaches which would pass off in a few days, or even a mere pretext to recall me.

On the night of April 30th I made the long journey over the Apennines and arrived in Venice on Thursday morning. At the station there was no one to meet me. I took that as a sign that George was really ill. When I reached the Palace I went in without announcing myself. There seemed to be no one about, so I made my way upstairs, taking note as I went of the disorder that had grown up everywhere in my absence—a broom and a dustpan left on the first landing, a soup tureen on an armchair a little further up—everywhere dust and cobwebs.

No one met me, so I walked into the long hall. At the lower end of it there was a little table covered with half empty wine and medicine bottles, and behind this on a sofa a man asleep. When I saw that it was Salvatore, the gondolier, I shook him by the shoulder and awakened him.

At the sight of me he jumped up and stood at attention.

"Where is your master?" I said.

"There, Signora."

I went to the door and knocked. Marshall's voice answered.

"Open to me!" I said, in the rather imperious tone I always used to Marshall.

"Oh! it's you, mum," he replied, cautiously opening the door and speaking in a whisper. "Master's asleep now."

"Tell me what has happened," I said, after going to the bed where George lay, his face turned towards the wall.

"Why, mum, he's been ailing now for more than a month—one headache after another, and always worse and worse. On Tuesday he felt very poorly, and went to bed, and on Thursday night he had a slight stroke; at least, so I understand from the Italian doctor. Mrs. Curzon came and sat awhile with him yesterday, and sent word to you in his name. Since then he has been very weak, and unable to take anything

solid. All last night he was in high fever, talking to himself and tossing about. It was only at half-past five that he fell asleep. I don't know how it will end," he continued. "Master was never took like this before in all the years I have been with him. He's run himself down to half the man he used to be with worrying over this and that."

"But why did you not telegraph to me before? It was your duty to let me know at once."

He did not speak, but seemed to be searching for an answer.

"Why did you not telegraph at once?" I asked again, sharply.

"I don't know, mum, if I should say it, but master, when he felt very bad and thought he was dying, forbade me to send you news of him."

"Is that the truth, Marshall?" I asked, turning red.

"As true as gospel, mum."

I looked at the man. He appeared thoroughly worn out.

"You have been up with him all the time?"

"I have. I have not left him a minute. Master wanted no one near him but me. When he's ill he doesn't like strangers to see him. Oh, mum, that's nothing but what I owe him. He's been a good master to me—a good, kind master. Since he picked me up and made a man of me fifteen years ago, I have had nothing to complain of, whatever he may have said and done when his temper got the better of him."

"You have shown yourself very attached," I said, "and I thank you for it; but don't lose heart now. It may not be so serious as you think."

"No, mum," he said, turning away.

I felt touched myself, and, at the same time, reproved, by the feeling shown by this man upon whom I had always looked with mistrust. If Mrs. Curzon had not telegraphed, I should have known nothing.

Since I had left him George had changed

his bedroom (coming down to the first floor to sleep), and had bought himself, probably at one of the antiquity shops, a beautiful four-poster bed, gilded and painted and hung with curtains of flowered silk. On this he had been tossing all night. If I had dared I would have tidied the bed-clothes which lay upon it in heaps; but I feared to wake him. So I prepared a cooling drink, and, after sending Marshall away, sat down to wait.

I was tired with my sleepless journey, and even the half light of the sick room weighed down my eyelids. Presently I dozed away. It was mid-day when I awoke. He was calling feebly for Marshall.

"I am here, George," I answered, bending over him.

"Who is it?"

"It's I—Olympia. I have come from Florence to nurse you."

He was silent, and for five minutes I waited trembling to know what effect it would have upon him.

"Turn me round," he said at last with a weary sigh. "I want to see you again."

I helped him to turn, and as I did so I noticed how wasted his hands and arms were.

"Let me see you," he continued. "Light a candle. If I can only see you distinctly it will do me good."

I fetched a candle and stood before him, waving the flame across my face, first on one side and then on the other, while I kept the light away from him with my other hand. The disorder of his bed was then more apparent. His silk nightshirt unbuttoned at the throat and wrists, the wash-leather blankets rolled up into a tangle with the bed-cover and a Scotch plaid. I longed to be up and doing something to make him comfortable, hardly daring to look him straight in the face. It was so far from anything I could have imagined to see him lying there like a child and gazing at me dimly.

"You are thinner than you were when I saw you first in Florence," he whispered at

last. " I worried you—worried you infernally during the months we lived together, but you will forgive me now, won't you ?"

" Forgive you ? Oh, George, it is not you who need ask for forgiveness," I said, taking his poor wasted hand in mine. " Tell me that you will pardon all the cruel wicked things I have said and done. You have been good to me always. Too good —you spoilt me from the first with your kindness."

" Don't weep, my little woman. I was always a rough fellow."

"You can't tell, George," I went on, "how sorry I am and how I reproach myself. You were right in not sending for me when you felt ill. It would have been a well-deserved punishment for the rest of my life if you had refused to have me at your bedside."

" You have been away from me a long while," he said as he gazed up at the painted canopy of the bed—" a very long time. When you left me it was to have

been for only a fortnight, just to take breathing time; but when you kept away and gave no hint of ever returning I lost heart. I am a poor hand at letters, and when I tried once or twice to put down what I wanted to say, the words would not come. There was nothing for it, I said at last, but to go and fetch you, so I took the train to Florence."

"To Florence!"

"Yes, to Florence; and I got as far as the gate of your villa."

"When was that?" I asked in astonishment.

"One evening about three weeks ago."

"And you did not come in?"

He closed his eyes as though the effort of speaking had been too much for him: his breathing became difficult, and as I watched him, his face was distorted at intervals by sharp pangs.

The sight of his sufferings had made me cry again. It reminded me of what poor mother had passed through in her last illness.

He had grown prematurely old and broken since January. His hair and beard were now quite grey: his eyes deep sunk, and his voice the merest whisper. I felt that Death had laid his hand upon him almost a score of years before the natural time.

What had been the cause?

I dared not ask myself.

But he began to speak again in spite of my remonstrances.

"Let me talk," he moaned. "I have not much more time, and you have been away so long!"

"I have, darling!" I cried, cut to the quick.

"It's good of you to come and see your poor old man again," he went on. "I knew you were a good sort."

"Then why did you not come in—at Florence?"

"It was late—night—I might have disturbed you. Before the morning my courage went, so, not feeling myself the

man I used to be, I came back by the first train."

"Oh!" I said, understanding what he must have gone through in his watching out the livelong night at the gate of the villa. "You might have come in—a few words would have gone a long way."

"That's it," he said. "A fellow like me does not know where to find the right words—that's the trouble."

The Doctor's visit interrupted us in our talk. He examined George, and after giving instructions about the nursing he said:

"If he wishes to talk let him do so, but lead his mind to dwell upon pleasant subjects. You can do that better than anyone else," he added amiably.

"I will do all I can," I answered, "but let me know your real opinion."

"If we can get him through two more days without another attack we may save him. His situation just now is most critical. In cases of tumour on the brain the

patient often rallies for weeks if his strength is not too much exhausted by the fever. He will be delirious, perhaps, this evening. Keep the ice bags on his head, and send for me if there is any change for the worse."

The Doctor's hope was not verified. For three days George's condition remained unchanged. His mind, except during two short intervals, was clear though very feeble. He spoke but little, lying there almost unconscious, but opening his eyes whenever I moved across the room.

On the fourth day he was in a high fever again and delirious.

All night the Doctor, Marshall and I were in attendance on him, fighting the fever and at last driving it back inch by inch. By six o'clock of the evening of the next day his temperature had fallen to its normal condition.

I do not know whether it was the sense of responsibility that supported me through the anxious hours of the crisis, and made

me hopeful even at the worst: or whether the feeling that what I did was a compensation—carried with it some charm and kept me up to the mark. It was then at any rate that I felt at my best—more courageous—more steady and more cheerful.

But in the long weary hours of watching, my thoughts, driven back upon themselves, harassed me unceasingly. At times the oppression they caused me became so unbearable that I was fain to go into the next room for a time lest I should awaken him.

On one occasion these thoughts were more than usually painful. It was that morning of the fifth day when the fever had begun to subside and Marshall had gone to get some sleep.

I was half dead of exhaustion, and I lay down on the sofa to get some rest. But rest would not come. I took up a book and tried to read, but that was of no avail. In spite of great weariness my mind went on working like some ceaseless machine that once set in motion would go on for ever. There

seemed to be no limit to its horrible activity. If I had been free to do as I liked, I would have started off on foot and walked till I fell down from fatigue. But there in that sick room I was afraid to make the least movement. I believe that I must have been feverish myself from my long watching: at any rate the nervous mental activity that tortured me took the form of a fixed idea which I was unable to shake off.

I fancied that since I had left him in January, George had been studying my note-books and that my description of him had had the effect of bringing on his illness. It was a dreadful idea, but one that appeared to me the more probable, the longer I thought about it. It was true that when we parted he had repudiated all interest in them; but I knew him well enough to know how much pride lay hidden in his denial. Was it likely that during the long evenings of his solitary life he had still held out? Surely, if not out of idle curiosity or the wish to interest himself in something, he

would have been led to read them by his longing to associate himself with me through my work!

But then what would have been the effect on him, embittered as he was by my desertion and already in failing health?

In my imagination, I could see him on a cold January night when the north wind flaps the waves against the basement of the palace, seated in the long drawing-room, the logs flaring up in the chimney, and throwing strange lights on the rafters of the ceiling and the portraits of the Doges above the doors—he there alone under the steady glare of the lamps with my manuscript in his hand. I saw him reading—staring at it through his spectacles—then springing up and pacing the room in amazement—throwing up his hands and talking wildly to himself. I saw the page and remembered the passage, the fever of my mind bringing it word for word to my recollection. It was a cold, cruel, minute comparison between him and my cousin Cuthbert, written

when we were in England. How I hated myself for writing it! Had I ever been fair—even moderately fair—to poor George? Had I ever written about him without a bias—without a burning desire to show off my own cleverness at his expense?

Oh! I saw it all now! The self-complacency with which I had taken to writing, and the folly that had pushed me into my wicked, heartless marriage—and how these things had stifled the kindlier feelings of my nature.

Certainly he was not perfection. Very far indeed from that. A man who, after twenty years of adventure, had of a sudden become rich, would be more than human if he did not lose his head in some things at least! To that side of him—to his weaknesses—I had done full justice. But about the other—about his generosity, his loyalty and courage—what had I said? Scarcely anything! A line here and there thrown in by way of relief to save myself from appearing one-sided to myself—to keep up the

illusion that I was a scientific observer. And then if I had really wanted to do the right thing in explaining many of his singularities, ought I not to have given the numberless little slights and vexations with which I had goaded him from day to day? It was there that my system had broken down. I had spared myself when it was a question of my own conduct, and said nothing. Was that right? No! Throughout the whole business I had acted meanly, while he had treated me magnanimously. I had justice enough left in me to recognize it and to see that his magnanimity was in itself a cloak wide enough to cover all his failings. A woman—another woman—with a wider sympathy than mine, what might not she have done with such a man? Would she not have put her pride into the work—the work of reclaiming all that was good in him and gently opposing the rest? Would she not have been kind to him and helpful—guiding him by the hand without vainglory?

Many women could have done it—women with no pretensions to genius.

But George was moving, and I went to his bedside. His eyes were open, and when he saw me, he tried to speak. I gave him something to drink, and then he began in a low voice that grew stronger as he continued.

"What time of day is it?"

I told him, and added that he must try to sleep as long as he could.

"I can't sleep any more now—there is something worrying me."

"What is it?" I asked, seeing he wished to relieve his mind by telling me.

"There's a copy of my will in there," he whispered, nodding feebly in the direction of the safe in the corner of the room. "It's the same as it was when I had it drawn up last summer in England. I've altered nothing."

"But is there no one else you wish to remember, George?"

"I've no one in the world but you and

Marshall. You will take care of him, won't you?"

"Yes. I promise you. Would you like me to call him and tell him so before you?"

He assented.

"Marshall," I said, when the man came into the room, "if your master could speak he would tell you himself how sensible he is of your care. He wishes me to assure you that if anything happens to him, I will take care that your interests do not suffer. Go to him now and thank him in a few words. It will ease him to know that you understand it."

The man went up to the bed as white as a ghost, and stood there unable to get out a word. George opened his eyes and tried to smile.

"Speak to your master," I said.

"God o' mercy, ma'am!" he faltered, turning to me, "I don't know what to say." And burst into a violent hysterical laugh.

"Get along, you silly fellow!" George

said. "Go and put your head in a bucket of water—that will set you straight again!"

Marshall left the room, and I could hear him wailing outside.

"He's a good fellow, but as soft as a woman!" George murmured. Then he relapsed into silence.

I thought he had said all he wanted to say, so I returned to the sofa and lay down; but after a while I heard him calling me again. He had managed to turn himself round. I thought this was a good sign, so I said cheerfully:

"You are getting on—you are stronger than you were an hour ago."

"No! No! Olympia! It's only a flicker: I shan't bother you much longer. I wanted to ask you something, but I've forgotten what it was."

"Don't worry about it now. It will come of itself by-and-by."

"It was the keys I wanted," he said presently. "They are in the watch pocket above my head."

I got them, and he said:

"Those books of yours are in the writing table. You left them with me, and I have taken care of them."

"Yes."

"I am very fond of them," he went on tenderly, "very, very fond of them. You used to spend so much time with them that it made me jealous, and at last I took them from you. But when you were away they reminded me of you more than anything else. I should have liked to read them."

"Have you never looked into them?" I asked, feeling a load beginning to slip off my heart. "Have you never even skimmed them?"

"No! no!" he answered. "I don't meddle with things that are not my own—unless I feel called to do so."

"Oh, George! I believed you had, and there was much in them about you."

"I guessed there might be," he answered.

"Dreadful, dreadful things! I can't tell you how wicked and cruel——"

"Don't take on, my girl—now don't!"

"George!"

"What is it?"

"Tell me again that you will forgive me. It was so bad of me, and you are so good."

"Why now! I liked the idea! I liked the idea!" he repeated. "There are not many men who get written about by their wives. Very few have wives who can say more than 'bo' to a goose. Fetch the books here."

I went and unlocked the writing table. They were wrapped up in paper on the top shelf.

I brought the parcel to him.

"Undo it!"

I took off the paper and found underneath a Russian leather case with my name stamped on the back. A little silver padlock secured it.

"The books are inside," he said with

satisfaction. "I had the case made to keep the dust off them. Give it me!"

I handed it to him and he laid it on his chest and clasped his hands over it reverently as though it were a talisman.

"I am going to leave you, Olympia," he moaned, and the tears gathered in his eyes. "I'm a fool, perhaps, but you won't refuse your old man a last favour, will you?"

"No! no! darling!" I cried, smoothing the hair off his forehead. "Only tell me anything I can do to give you pleasure."

"You set great store on the books?" he asked.

"I used to—but now——"

"You used to when we married, and afterwards. In Paris you spent all your mornings writing in them."

"Yes."

"I want you"—he hesitated—"I want you to let me keep them."

"But you have them there—I will not take them away."

"I mean," he said, "that when I go I may carry them along with me."

"George!"

"I love them! I love them!" he cried with vehemence. "I love them because they are your work. They will be your parting gift. You won't say no, will you?"

"How can I?" I sobbed. "They are yours to carry into the grave."

Then his face became bright with a great joy, and he stretched up his hands to me, and as I bent over and kissed him, he whispered:

"Up there, when George comes to the gate he will give them to Peter, and Peter will read them from beginning to end, and when he has read them, he will know everything about George, because it was George's wife who wrote them. Then Peter will let George pass."

FINIS.

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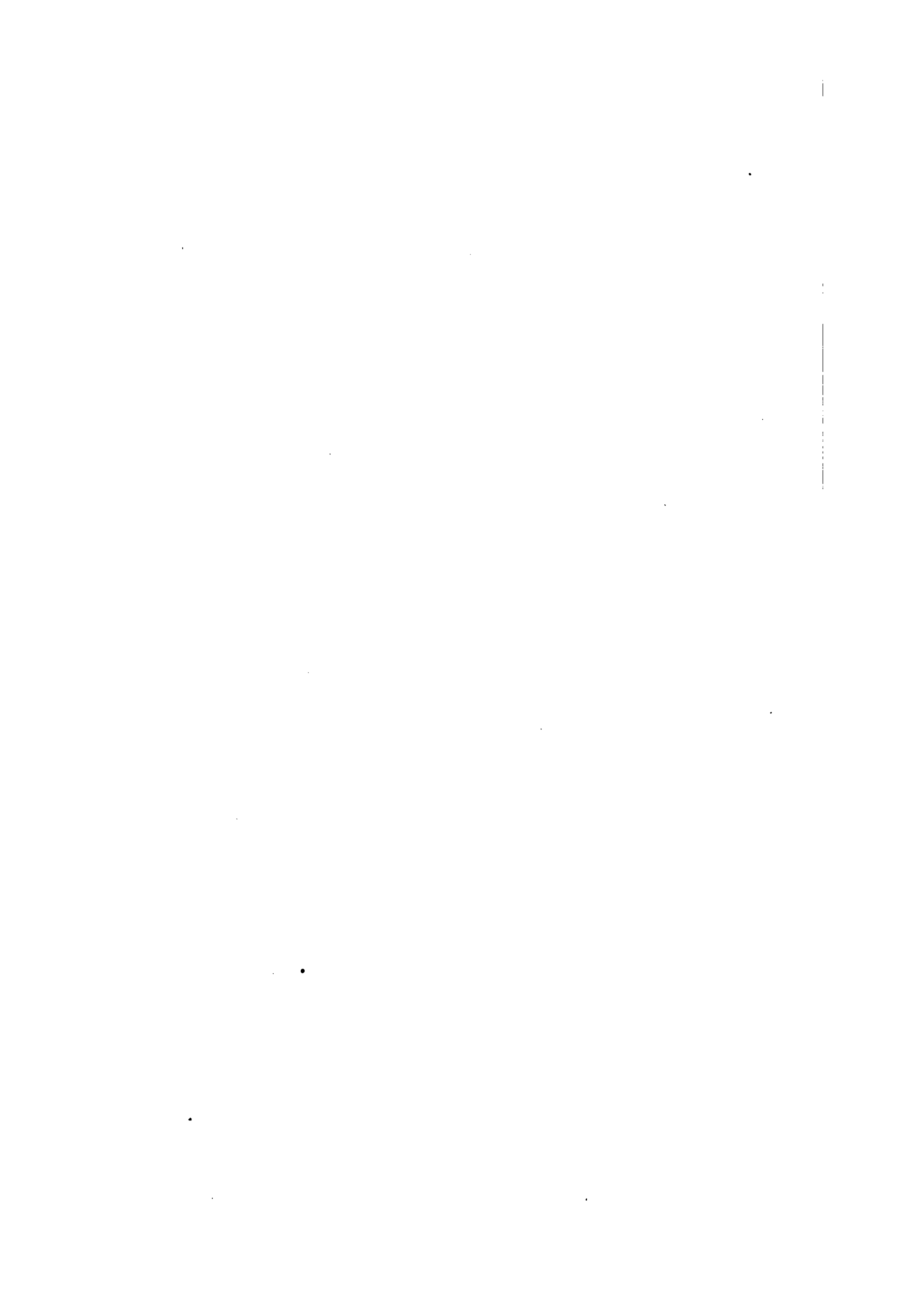

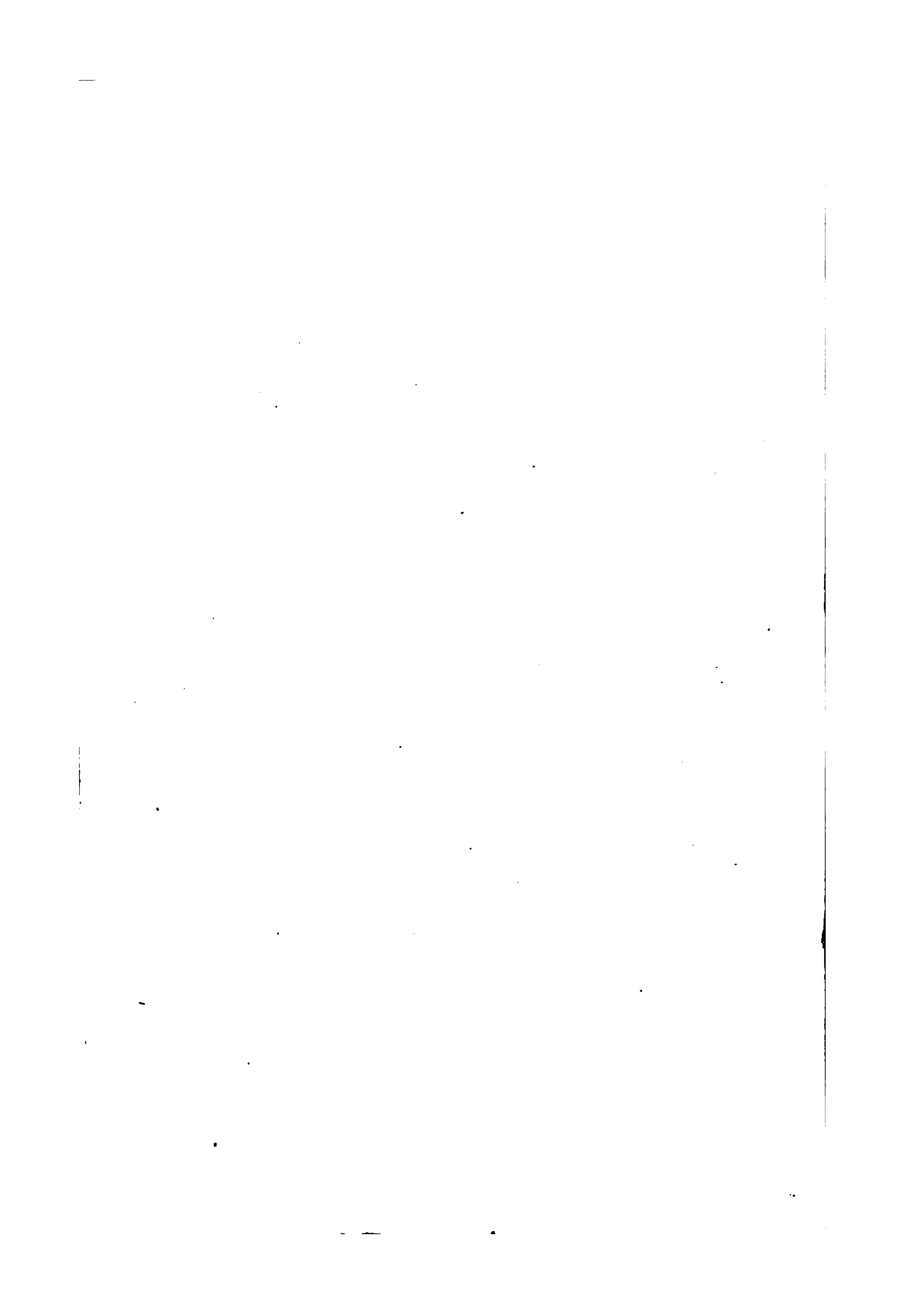

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